

SEEDBED

Practitioners in Conversation

August 2009, Volume XXIII No 2

Church Planting in the Arab World: Context, Strategies and Roles

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SEEDBED

Practitioners in Conversation

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Subscription Information

UK & Europe £8.00* \$12.00 US / CN\$ 15.00

All others £9.00* \$13.00 US / CN\$ 16.00 (Surface mail)

£8.50* \$17.00 US / CN\$ 20.00 (Air mail)

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CANADA: AWM, Seedbed, PO Box 3398, Cambridge ON N3H 4T3

UK, Europe AWM, Seedbed, PO Box 4006, Worthing, West Sussex BN13 1AP
& International (in £s only please)

Annual subscriptions begin with the first issue of the year.

Mid-year subscribers will be sent back issues for that year.

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ISSN 1365-750x

Printed in the UK by Verité CM Ltd

EDITORIAL:

CHURCH PLANTING AMID THE DIVERSITY IN THE ARAB WORLD

On Easter Sunday this year I had the privilege of participating in four gatherings of believers, in Morocco. Each gathering brought back precious memories of the decade we spent living and ministering there. They also brought together, *in one day*, many of the themes and issues covered in *Seedbed* in this issue.

Arriving just before dawn Easter morning, I joined some fifty members of the International Church, believers from numerous nations, who gathered together outside the ancient walls of a ruined citadel to worship together and celebrate the resurrection. Then, most of us joined others in the pastor's home to have breakfast and fellowship for a couple of hours before the formal service later that morning. Then, I joined perhaps 200 worshippers from more than twenty-five nations for a joyous Easter service with the International Church. Shortly after, I joined perhaps a hundred local Moroccan believers as they gathered together in a park to celebrate Easter for most of the day.

Though I had been part of both church groups more than a decade ago, I knew surprisingly few people in either group. In the case of the International Church, this was because most of the people I had known had long since left the country. In the second case, the gathering of Moroccan believers was full of children, youth and adults who were not yet believers when we left the country in 1998, and so I knew only perhaps a dozen of the believers gathered in joyous celebration.

My Easter Sunday illustrates the experience of church planters who live in large cities across the Arab world. Part of their week is spent with Christians from around the world that belong to the local International Church, and the rest of their week is spent living and working among locals and expatriates at work and in their neighbourhoods. In various ways, each of the articles in this issue of *Seedbed* explores how church planting actually works. Some of the writers call for more integration between International Church believers and expatriate church planters, while others suggest that such integration is either extremely difficult to pull off, or irrelevant to our central church planting task.

It is my hope and prayer that this issue of *Seedbed* will renew your vision and help sustain your faith. May you continue with joy in the various tasks that God has called you to as you help see healthy churches reproducing among the Muslim peoples of the Arab world and beyond.

Don Little, Editor

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: A CRITIQUE OF ABDULFADI'S 'MODERN ARABIC TRANSLATIONS'

(Abdulfadi's article was published in Seedbed, 2008, Vol. XXII, No. 2, 7-20)

By Sharon Warner

Sharon Warner and her husband Tim are translators. They have been living in the Arabian Peninsula since 1993. Together they wrote 'Choosing an Arabic Bible', in Seedbed, 2008, Vol. XXII, No. 2, pp. 21-32.

Ambitiously addressing issues that pertain to many disciplines including theology, exegesis, and linguistics, Abdulfadi uses a theological lens 'to consider the various translations on the basis of their clarity in communicating the deity of Christ,' by 'review(ing) the main passages in both the Old and the New Testaments that bear witness to the deity of Christ, and consider(ing) carefully what each translation communicates.'

I appreciate and share Abdulfadi's strong concern that translations of scripture clearly communicate the deity of Christ. Additionally, some of the questions he raises regarding how key Biblical terms are rendered in Arabic are excellent questions to ask. However, the usefulness of his article and the validity of its conclusions are limited by his strong theological lens, atomistic methodology and lack of expertise in linguistics and translation theory. Additionally, he repeatedly overstates his case, overemphasizing the importance of specific passages and not mentioning even commonly held alternatives to his interpretations.

Abdulfadi refers to the five OT and five NT passages he examines as 'the key Christological passages' in Scripture, stating that some ways of translating these passages could in themselves 'obscure' the deity of Christ. Only in his conclusion does he briefly mention what many current evangelical scholars consider to be the most powerful biblical witness to the deity of Christ, i.e., the witness to his deity as NT writers apply words and concepts – previously used uniquely of God – to Jesus. Recent research, especially into Judaism around the time of Christ and early Christianity,¹ has given the evangelical community resources such as *Putting Jesus in His Place: the Case for the Deity of Christ*. Here, Komoszewski and Bowman cite over 3500 (!) Bible passages, and introduce the acronym HANDS, to help readers remember scriptural bases for how Jesus shares the unique Honours, Attributes, Names, Deeds and Seat of God.² With this wealth of biblical evidence to use in ministry, the exact translation (or interpretation) of any particular verse becomes less crucial.

1. Bauckham's *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity*, (2008) is an expanded, revised edition of *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (1999), which has been strongly influential in redirecting scholarly discussion of early Christology.

2. Kenneth Bailey takes another approach, arguing that from a Middle Eastern perspective, a high Christology can be clearly seen in Jesus' parables (not generally considered as being Christological by Western post-enlightenment thinkers). A list of resources can be found at www.shenango.org/bailey.htm.



Abdulfadi's assumptions and viewpoint pervasively influence his observations and conclusions, particularly in the areas of (1) the theological lens through which he interprets, (2) the methodology of atomistic proof-texting and demanding OT passages be translated to match the NT,³ (3) the locus of who decides that an Arabic text is clear in its communication (apparently himself), and (4) preferred translation type.

Since for Abdulfadi, the theological issue of seeing the deity of Christ in the cited verses appears to be of more importance than anything else, he does not examine exegetical issues such as whether the verses necessarily (or exclusively) address the deity of Christ (or the translation issue of whether the words he advocates would communicate this idea to Arab Muslims). For example, Psalm 2 is a 'Royal' or 'enthronement' Psalm that, as he mentions, applied to Davidic kings and was understood as Messianic by the time of Christ (but not referring to deity). NT references to Psalm 2:7 refer to the Lordship or exaltation of Christ, but not to deity.⁴ An optimal translation of this (or any other passage) should not eliminate or distort the original meaning, in the interest of bringing out a theological point, or matching the OT with the NT.

Abdulfadi tends to disregard context, both historical and scriptural, in his preference for theological interpretation. For example, he interprets Micah 5:2 'one whose origins are in the distant past' as implying Messianic pre-existence. In the OT, however, this Hebrew phrase is used primarily to refer to early periods in history, often specifically to Davidic times.⁵ The mention of Bethlehem in the verse, and the context of the verse in Micah, implies a clear reference to a Messiah of the Davidic line.⁶

Abdulfadi's lack of knowledge of some aspects of Hebrew, Greek and the LXX results in inaccurate and misleading statements on which he bases arguments and draws conclusions. One example is Psalm 110, the LXX version of which is cited heavily in the NT. The pertinent Hebrew *ne'um YHWH la-'adoni*, is literally 'utterance of Yahweh to my lord.' The prophetic noun phrase, 'utterance of Yahweh,' is followed by 'to my lord,' where 'my lord' is *adoni*, a word always in the OT used of a human being, usually a king.⁷ The related Hebrew word, *adonai* 'Lord,' is used over 700 times in the OT and is reserved for God alone. The LXX quoted by the NT makes no distinction between these two words, using *kyrios* for both: 'the lord said to my lord.'⁸ Translating *adoni* in this

3. Most evangelical scholars suggest exegesis should be contextual, both historically and literarily.

4. Many commentaries support this contention; particularly useful are the many articles in Beale and Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 2007

5. Esp. later writings such as Malachi 3:4, Amos 9:11

6. In *Jesus Divine Messiah: NT Witness*, Raymond (p. 61) mentions this verse only as declaring the Messiah would be in the lineage of David. The additional interpretation is possible, just not obligatory or obvious, whereas other verses DO show the eternal nature of Jesus the Messiah.

7. Incidentally supporting the TAV translation Abdulfadi is troubled by.

8. This is consistent with LXX and NT Greek usage for people and God, despite Abdulfadi's claims about first century Greek speakers. See any study on the use of this word such as BDAG, Thayer, or an interlinear NT.



passage as 'lord' or 'master' is an accurate reflection of the meaning of the Hebrew, which does not, as Abdulfadi claims, 'require... a systematic denial of the New Testament use of the passage.' Instead, it requires us to struggle with the fact that the NT quotes a translation of the OT which does exactly what Abdulfadi condemns the Kitaab al Shariif (KS) for: it is inconsistent in translating even the names of God, and uses the same word for multiple concepts.

Although Abdulfadi argues that the KS translation should translate *elohim* 'God' and YHWH (God's proper name) by different words (rather than *allah*), the LXX, uses *kyrios* for at least seven different Hebrew words/phrases for both God and men: *adonai*, *eloah*, *elohim*, *yhwah*, *ya*, *adonai yhwah*, and '*adoni*.

Abdulfadi has an inadequate understanding of what terminology is understandable to a Muslim audience,⁹ and shows a preference for a particular Arabic cultural tradition over commonly accepted language use. For example, he supports the Arabic term *al-rabb*¹⁰ to translate Hebrew *adonai*, YHWH, (*adoni* from Ps 110), and Greek *kyrios*,¹¹ as implying deity. In most of the Arabic speaking world,¹² *rabb* is found only in *idaafa* or possessive constructions such as the vocative *ya rabbi* 'O my lord.' Although non-Christians can be taught that in the Bible *al-rabb* refers to God, they don't use it (or easily understand it) on their own. If Abdulfadi's intention is to sit with individuals as he goes through the Bible with them, then a translation with Christian ecclesiastic terminology such as *al-rabb* can be used.¹³ However, for a person unacquainted with terms such as *al-rabb*, it will be a barrier to understanding.

Abdulfadi does not acknowledge that different styles of translation are useful for different purposes.¹⁴ For in-depth Bible study, comparing passages, syntactical and lexical items, an inter-linear Bible or very formally-equivalent translation is useful. However, for understanding the meaning of scriptures in the absence of commentaries or educated Christians, meaning-based translations are a powerful tool.¹⁵

Just as we are fortunate to have many translations in English, so the Arab world is fortunate to have an increasing number of translations available, although so far, only one (KS) specifically attempts to use words Muslims can understand

9. Also, he asserts that the TAV makes an effort to choose neutral or Muslim terminology.

According to the TAV introduction, however, this translation was produced by an interdenominational team of Christian Arab leaders and scholars who wanted a more easily read Arabic, with no reference to choices having been made with a Muslim audience in mind.

10. Used in SVB/TAV/KH but not KS

11. Presumably not when *kyrios* is used of other people

12. Outside of Christian ecclesiastical terminology (Christian Arabs and Muslim Arabs use different religious terminology).

13. This method has some potential negative consequences, such as Arab believers not knowing that they can read the bible themselves for understanding. I have seen the results of such an approach multiple times.

14. See Warner and Warner, 'Choosing an Arabic Bible Based on comprehensibility and translation philosophy,' *Seedbed* 2008 22(2) wherein Fee and Strauss 2007 are cited.

15. Or they can serve as an auxiliary even for the educated reader, when a primary translation makes no sense.



without significant assistance. It can be hoped that future Arabic translations will improve in clarity, accuracy, accessibility and elegance.¹⁶ Most Arabs easily understand that translations do not convey the exact meaning of the original. Having several different translations can be very useful to those studying the Bible, especially as differences in translations (whether Arabic or English) often highlight textual, exegetical, or translation issues. We can be assured, however, that the message of the Gospel, including the deity of Christ, is redundantly present in the Scriptures, regardless of the translation used, and that multiple translations offer further opportunities to communicate God's Good News.

ABDULFADI'S RESPONSE TO WARNER'S CRITIQUE

I will limit my response to Sharon Warner's comments concerning the methodology used in the article, principles of interpretation and the role of meaning-based (functionally equivalent) translations.

Warner expresses her opinion that the passages chosen for review were limited. The verdict: 'guilty by design'. A thorough comparison of the 3500+ indirect (and powerful) references to the deity of Christ would be of great value, and I look forward to reading *Putting Jesus in His Place*. But that is hardly a workable strategy for a short, practical article addressed to field colleagues.

I compared the translations for the passages discussed in detail by Robert Reymond in his work, *Jesus, Divine Messiah*. Besides those passages on which I made detailed comments, I listed a number of both OT and NT passages whose treatment in the four translations was reviewed but did not require significant comment. It was this larger body to which I referred when I wrote 'The SVDB, the KH and the TAV give clear translations of the key Christological passages, with some failures of varying degrees as noted...' and it is a misrepresentation to say that 'Abdulfadi refers to the *five* OT and *five* NT passages he examines as 'the key Christological passages' in Scripture.' (Emphasis added)

More serious is the concern expressed by Warner that a 'theological lens' (trying to find the deity of Christ) limited the usefulness of the comparison. It is true that each passage was approached as if its relevance to the deity of Christ was an already established fact.¹ The magnificent exegetical work and scholarly conclusions of Robert Reymond's *Jesus, Divine Messiah* were, as stated, the basis and starting point for evaluation. Reymond extensively examines the relevance of the passages to the deity of Christ and weighs the mass of scholarly work on them, something far beyond the scope of the article.

16. A new meaning-based non-ecclesiastical Arabic translation, *Al-ma'naa as-sabiib li-injiil al-masiib* is a further edition to the Arabic alternatives.

1. I am puzzled by Warner's contention that the NT applications of Psalm 2:7 are concerned with the lordship of Christ, but not his deity, as if they are unrelated.



Warner also takes exception to my concern that OT Christological passages quoted in the NT not be translated in such a way as to compromise their application in the NT. Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:1 are particularly in view here, but the issue is relevant to many other passages. I agree wholeheartedly with Warner's concern to take into account historical and scriptural context and not to simply mindlessly force agreement with the NT. But a proper concern for scriptural context must accommodate the hermeneutical principle of the Christ-centeredness of the Old Testament taught by Jesus in Luke 24. Fortunately, the problem can often be resolved if the translator does not over-explain (like adding 'the king' in Psalm 110:1, as the TAV does). Then the New Testament applications, showing that a 'higher David' was ultimately intended, are not compromised.

This last point leads us to consider the complaint that I do not acknowledge the usefulness of meaning-based translations. I do, but with conditions. A meaning-based translator will clarify meaning based on his or her exegesis of the passage. The clarification inevitably limits the richness of meaning in the text, often because of the departure, however slight, from the words and the form of the text. Vern Poythress says it this way: '(O)ne must resist cutting the Gordian knot of difficulty by always preferring immediate clarity and intelligibility, even to unbelievers, at the expense of richer representation of original meaning. Constant preference for immediate clarity falsifies the depth and richness that belongs to the word of God.'²

So what is acceptable clarification? In cases of idiom and unfamiliar cultural references most field workers would applaud a meaning-based approach. Warner and Warner's article gives many examples. But for words, phrases and titles that fall into the area that Warner and Warner helpfully call 'worldview differences', extensive clarification will limit the original meaning and also necessarily reflect the theological viewpoint and ideology of the translator. As new ministry trends come onto the scene, proponents call for translations that accommodate their agenda. The insider movement has called for translations that accommodate the Muslim worldview, and some have openly questioned in that context the importance of the deity of Christ for evangelism and the health of the church. The field worker deserves to know both the translation policy and *the details* of the translations. Meaning-based treatments of specific passages that mute, either deliberately or unintentionally, any witness of the Bible to the deity of Christ should not be defended with the justification that the Bible gives redundant testimony to the deity of Christ.

The problems discussed in my article do not mean that the KS is without value; they do show real issues in the important area of the Bible's witness to the deity of Christ. Field workers should be aware of the problems in all four translations. Finally, the problems could be addressed in future editions.³

2. See 5th paragraph of: http://www.frame-poythress.org/poythress_articles/2005Bible.htm.

3. I note again that many of the passages discussed were very different in the editions of the KS NT published before 2000.



**PART I:
ARAB WORLD CHURCH PLANTING: CONTEXT, STRATEGY AND
APPROACHES**

PRACTICES THAT SIGNIFICANTLY CORRELATE WITH FRUITFULNESS AMONG PEOPLES OF THE ARAB WORLD

by **Bob Fish, Don Allen and Eric Adams**

The authors are members of the Fruitful Practices Taskforce. This is a collaborative, multi-agency network of missiologists who are studying effective field practitioners and how God is working through them. Through this they identify and publicize practices that are demonstrably 'fruitful' in facilitating faith movements among Muslim peoples. They can be contacted at FruitfulPractices@gmail.com.

Abstract: Research from church planting field practitioners in the Arab Affinity Bloc demonstrates a relationship between fruitfulness in ministry and the following categories of Fruitful Practices: communication (including fluency, using the heart language, integrating learning preference into their strategy); encouragement of seekers and new believers; modelling life as a follower of Jesus; equipping new believers to share and defend their faith; and persistent prayer.

1. What are Fruitful Practices?

We define a Fruitful Practice as an activity that demonstrably promotes the emergence, vitality and multiplication of fellowships of Jesus-followers. We recognize that God draws people to himself, and it is ultimately his Spirit that does the work of conversion. He alone determines when people have crossed from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Yet, for his own unfathomable reasons, God chooses to use us in the process and we can, as Paul warns in 1 Thessalonians, put out the Spirit's fire. The converse must also be true – we can work in harmony with the Spirit and his purposes.

We have set out an apologetic for this approach in other documents and refer the reader to these for an extended treatment of the subject (Allen 2008a, and *From Seed to Fruit*, chapters 7-12 in Woodberry 2008). In this paper, we seek to take a first look at some potential Fruitful Practices in the Arab Affinity Bloc. Johnstone (2007) defined this grouping of peoples as straddling North Africa and West Asia, covering 'most of the areas where Arabic is the dominant language.'¹

1. Patrick Johnson, 'Affinity Blocks and People Clusters: An Approach toward Strategic Insight and Mission Partnership,' *Mission Frontiers*, March-April 2007, p. 11.
(<http://missionfrontiers.org/pdf/2007/02/200702.htm>)



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The only contextual variable that was significantly related to this measure of fruitfulness was whether or not there was at least one person on the team fluent in the language of ministry.

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This is the beginning of a process, not its culmination. We have studied the expertise of a small number of fruitful workers in these fields. We are continuing the research, especially seeking to include types of workers who are not adequately represented in our original sample. To this end, we would be grateful for discussion, comment, elaboration, examples and critique of this attempt, in order to begin a collaborative exploration of the relationship between our activities and fruitfulness. (Send your comments and responses to the Seedbed editor and he will pass them on to the authors, or write to us directly at FruitfulPractices@gmail.com.)

In 2007, 300 practitioners – workers called to play their part in the formation of communities of Jesus followers among Muslims – from 34 agencies met at a consultation to explore specific practices that seem to contribute to fruitfulness. During this five-day event, we captured their lessons learned, insights and stories through surveys, ministry profiles, small group discussions and interviews. This paper focuses on results specific to the Arab Affinity Bloc.

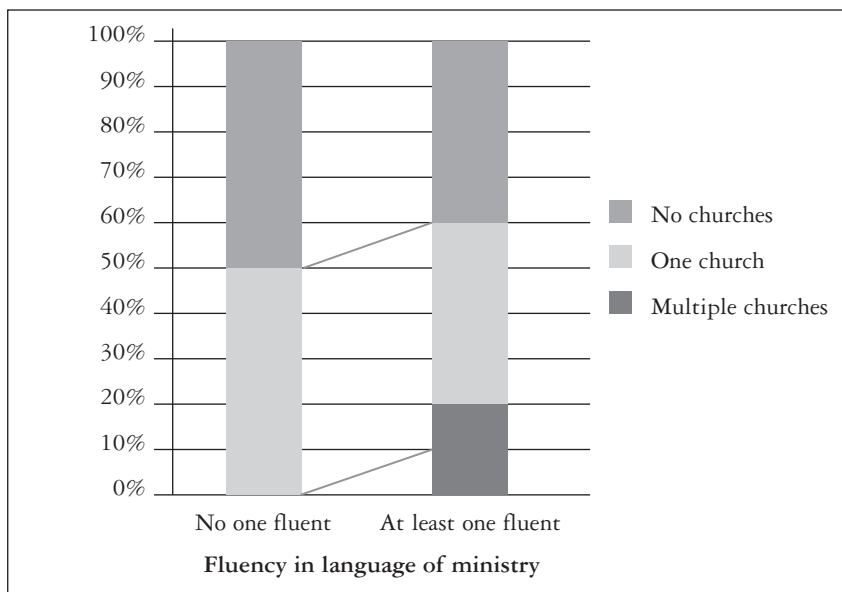


Figure 1: Percentage of participants reporting church planting fruitfulness. The first bar represents those that reported that no one on their team had achieved fluency in the language of ministry. The second bar indicates teams with at least one member fluent in the language of ministry.

2. The context of church planting

There were 59 present at the consultation working in the Arab Affinity Bloc. Thirty-eight of these completed a questionnaire relating to seventeen contextual factors affecting fruitfulness (e.g. age, gender, time on field).² All of these 38 workers had current (86%) or past field experience. The teams on which they served had a combined total of 425 years of field experience (*i.e.* the total number of years these teams had been present, not the total experience of the 38 individuals). The sample is biased towards younger (71% age 49 and below), male (79%) Americans (61%). However, participants also hailed from Latin America (13%) Europe (16%), Oceania (3%), East Asia (3%) and the Middle East (3%).

Participants were asked whether they had planted zero, one or multiple churches. Since the survey forms did not at this point offer a specific definition of 'church' this measure of fruitfulness is not easy to characterize. The only contextual variable that was significantly related to this measure of fruitfulness was whether or not there was at least one person on the team fluent in the language of ministry (figure 1).

At a later stage of the consultation, participants were asked to indicate how many fellowships they had established. For the purposes of this part of the study only, a fellowship was defined as three or more believers gathering together to follow Jesus. A total of 109 fellowships were reported established by the 38 participants. Of these 109 fellowships, 94% were established by teams that had:

- Incorporated the learning preference of a people group (oral vs. literate) into their team strategy
- Used the local language as opposed to the regional trade language
- At least one team member fluent in the ministry language

3. Fruitful Practices for Church Planting – Our Activities Matter

The total group of 59 participants were also asked (in a yes/no question) whether or not they practiced each of a list of 102 fruitful practices. Of those who answered the questions in Table 1³ positively, more than the statistically expected number had planted one or multiple churches. All who answered negatively to the Fruitful Practice statements in Table 1 had planted no more than one church. So, we can see that these practices are significantly correlated with fruitfulness among practitioners in the Arab Affinity Bloc.

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2. For complete details of the variables examined, see the report by The Knowledge Stewardship Team on the CD-ROM in *From Seed to Fruit* (Woodberry 2008)
 3. Cross-tabulation was used to examine significant relationships between fruitfulness and practice. Due to missing values, sample size for each test ranged from 30-48 participants. Significant differences of practice emerged among those who had planted zero, one or multiple churches for several of the fruitful practice statements (Chi-square tests, $p < 0.05$).



No.	Fruitful Practice Statement	Practice = No			Practice = Yes		
		# churches planted			# churches planted		
		0	1	M	0	1	M
43	He/she lives and works closely with believers and models the Christian life.	100%	0	0	32%	46%	22%
43	He/she equips believers to be able to answer basic apologetic questions.	67	33	0	22	56	26
43	They mobilize extensive, intentional and focused prayer (i.e. a large number of intercessors over a long period of time).	25	75	0	50	25	25
43	They are committed to regular sustained prayer, fasting and spiritual warfare.	80	20	0	33	39	28
43	They use Scripture as the textbook for leadership qualifications and training.	86	14	0	31	47	22
43	They encourage MBBs to share their testimony.	71	29	0	31	45	24
43	They use a variety of effective discipleship methods (one-on-one, in groups, etc.).	83	17	0	26	52	22
43	He/she encourages new believers to be involved in evangelism.	83	17	0	30	49	21
43	The fruitful MBB church has more than one leader.	N/A	100	0	N/A	52	48

Table 1: Fruitful Practices where there were significant differences in practice among levels of fruitfulness. Participants indicated whether or not they practiced a particular Fruitful Practice (yes/no) and whether or not they had planted zero (0), one (1) or multiple (M) churches. (Participants defined the term 'church' independently.) Numbers in the first column represent respondents to the question, numbers in the last six columns indicate percent of participants.

The above analysis examined each practice individually for its relationship with fruitfulness. It would also be helpful to understand if people who are more fruitful practiced Fruitful Practices more similarly to each other than to those

who are less fruitful. We were able to assess this for 20 Fruitful Practice statements on evangelism which were answered by 41 participants.⁴ The overall pattern is that those who were most fruitful were more similar to each other in their evangelism practices, as defined in our 20 questions, than to those who were not yet as fruitful.

The most fruitful workers in the Arab Affinity Bloc were more similar to each other in their church planting practices than to those less fruitful. These results suggest that there are some activities that God is blessing with more fruit than others. Of course, the results are only suggestive; the sample group was quite small. Additionally, we must be careful not to attribute causation to these factors. As in all correlation studies, the exact nature of the relationship cannot be specified. However, we believe that these results hint at what will prove to be a much more detailed and extensive set of Fruitful Practices that can be identified as having the potential to significantly affect church planting fruitfulness. As we continue to study the Lord's work in this and other Affinity Blocs, we will observe more of the various ways in which he is blessing our work.

The most fruitful workers in the Arab Affinity Bloc were more similar to each other in their church planting practices than to those less fruitful.

Clearly, a number of activities promote fruitfulness. Consultation participants were asked to evaluate 102 practices that previous research, by a number of different agencies, suggested were fruitful. Surveys completed at the consultation indicated that all of these practices were judged by participants to be important or important in impacting fruitfulness. Chapters 7-12 in *From Seed to Fruit*, (Woodberry, 2008) show that each of these practices promotes fruit in different ways in different contexts. However, some practices appear to be more common among those who are more fruitful. What are these practices?

To begin answering this question, we examined the occurrence of these practices among workers who have been a part of ministries of differing fruitfulness. This paper begins that process for a small sample of workers seeking to establish churches in the Arab Affinity Bloc. Naturally, a simple comparison such as the one presented here does not do justice to the multitude of factors which can impact fruitfulness. Yet a pattern emerges that gives us pointers and helps us to form new hypotheses to test and questions to ask. As we explored the data, we discovered that fruitful practitioners generally give more attention to certain practices than less fruitful practitioners. These four areas are communication, encouraging and modelling, equipping and prayer.

4. The similarity among participants is assessed using a similarity coefficient (Jaccard) which takes into account the answers to the 20 questions simultaneously (Zar 1984). This similarity matrix is then replicated in 2 and 3 dimensions using a process called multi-dimensional scaling, which plots the relative similarity among participants (Clark and Gorley 2006). Contact the authors if you would like more details on this analysis.



3.1. Communication

Fruitful teams communicate (1) with fluency, (2) in the heart language, and (3) in the learning preference of the audience (oral vs. literate). These three values have more weight than team longevity, team size, and other demographic features of the team or the people group among whom they minister. Themes of fruitfulness related to these three factors are also reported from quantitative and qualitative researchers working on the main dataset and interviews, (Allen 2008b, Burke 2008a, b, Chard and Chard 2008, Colgate 2008 and Greenlee and Wilson 2008, Adams et al. 2009). A team that had no members with high language skill, that did not take into account the learning style preferences of the local people in their team strategy and that ministered in the regional trade language, had only a seven percent probability that they had planted a church (The Knowledge Stewardship Team, 2008). Conversely, a team that had at least one person of high language skill, that incorporated learning preference into their strategy and that worked in the local language evidenced an 83 percent probability of having planted at least one church. About half who met these criteria (41 percent of all respondents) had planted multiple churches.

Furthermore, a number of researchers who have studied this data note that a combination of literate and oral approaches is often fruitful (Burke 2008a, Colgate 2008 and Greenlee and Wilson 2008). This could be due to the prestige of certain languages such as Arabic in Islam or adapting the common practice of using a copy of a book for reciting along with oral methods of discussing the recitation (DSM 2007 and Colgate 2008). Additionally, issues such as the topic and setting, language changes with globalization and diglossia (communities using two dialects) impact language choice (Burke 2008a and Anonymous 2008). Women report that working in the heart language was important more often than did men, perhaps due to fewer opportunities to learn a regional trade language (Greenlee and Wilson 2008 and Burke 2008b). Numerous other works indicate the benefit of orality approaches for functionally oral cultures (International Orality Network 2005 and LDH 2007, for example).

3.2. Encouraging and Modelling

More fruitful teams tend to encourage new believers to be involved in evangelism, and specifically, to share their testimony. The benefits of this approach are obvious and have been noted by other authors (Greenlee and Love 2005). The reluctance on the part of some new believers is understandable. In some cultures, it may be easier for new believers to share their faith with someone outside their family.⁵ However, this would tend towards inhibiting the implanting of the Gospel within social networks, a strategy which has been

5. Personal communication from Dan Sinclair

theorized to be more fruitful in the long run (Bell 1974), with recent data tending to support this hypothesis for all workers at the 2007 consultation (Adams et al. 2009, Gray and Gray 2009). It has also been reported that fear of sharing their faith has often been transmitted by the worker themselves (Gupta 2005). Reporting on global data from the consultation, not just from the Arab Affinity Bloc, Greenlee and Wilson (2008) report that women were less likely to encourage MBBs to share their testimony than men.

The importance of working closely with believers and modelling the Christian life was highlighted by Becker and Simuyu (2008). They reported, 'The availability of the messenger to walk with the MBB, sharing in his or her struggles as much as possible, is one of the most fruitful activities in the discipleship process. Discipleship is not just giving content. It is relational' (p. 127). They assert that practitioners need to be humble enough to learn and admit fault, and they need to be available enough to model a Jesus-centred lifestyle.

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3.3. Equipping

More fruitful teams use Scripture as their textbook for leadership qualification and training. This equips new believers with Scripture as a foundational base. Adams and Adams (2008) report, though, that it requires significant cultural understanding to apply the Bible in an appropriate manner. This Fruitful Practice then is synergistic, perhaps significantly undermined without the Fruitful Practices focused on clear communication of scripture and the gospel. As we might expect, teams that use a variety of discipleship methods tend to be more fruitful than those that do not. Interestingly, equipping believers to answer basic apologetic questions was fruitful. We cannot determine from this survey whether or not this is more beneficial because it helped MBBs to retain their faith in the face of counter arguments or because it was effective in evangelism.

3.4. Prayer

All Christians know that we should pray. Analysis of interviews reported elsewhere (Daniels 2008) show that this was a vital aspect of most fruitful teams' ministry. Daniels writes '...prayer surrounded all Fruitful Practices like air surrounds our bodies.' He concludes, 'Prayer is truly a very Fruitful Practice, it quite literally saturated the narratives I reviewed, and this was usually a very active kind of prayer, workers acting as if they truly expected God to hear them and intervene.'⁶ Interestingly, there were mixed results for those workers who

6. If you would like a copy of Daniels' study and its findings on the role of prayer, please email the authors and we will send the PDF document to you.

We must do more than pray, but it is unlikely that we will produce lasting fruit without praying.

mobilized extensive, international and focused prayer, such as a widely publicized year of prayer for their country or people. Half of the teams that reported that they do such activities had not planted a church; only a quarter of those reporting that they don't do this activity had not planted a church. However, all who reported planting multiple churches had been engaged in prayer in this way. Daniels (2008) also reports extensively on the use of prayer as an evangelistic activity. Adams et al. (2009) indicated that prayer was one of seven fruitful factors that characterized participants at the consultation as a whole. Clearly we know we should pray, but it can seem optional or sometimes perfunctory. We must do more than pray, but it is unlikely that we will produce lasting fruit without praying.

3.5. Multiple Leadership

One further factor arises from this study. Workers who reported that the fellowships they had helped to plant had more than one leader tended to have planted more churches than workers who did not report multiple leaders. Sinclair (2006) and others have given a number of examples of the importance of a plurality of leaders. The data in the Arab Affinity Bloc concur that this characteristic is associated with more fruitful teams.

Conclusions and Application

How can you apply these findings to your ministry? We suggest that you take some time to reflect on the areas we have identified as particularly influencing fruitfulness. Are you communicating in a way that your audience can best understand? In what ways are you encouraging and modelling for the believers you work with? Are the believers you work with being equipped well and in areas that will lead to fruitfulness? Are you spending enough time praying or perhaps too much time mobilizing prayer? We would also encourage you, as you might imagine, to read our article entitled 'Seven Fruitful Factors' (Adams et al. 2009). In this article a number of themes are explored in narrative form. Perhaps some of the themes not touched on in this current article, such as storying, reputation, scripture use and intentional reproduction, might be helpful for your specific situation.

Whether or not it is the success of one person, 59 people (as in this study) or 1000, often we look to successful examples of ministry and try to replicate what others have done. We hope you will not do that with this research! We strongly advocate reflective practice. Carefully consider what others have done, their relative success and then prayerfully apply these results to your own situation. The Fruitful Practices identified in this study could benefit your ministry, they

have for others. However, we must carefully consider the specific situation to which they are applied and modify those aspects that are unlikely to fit. Experiment, innovate and test these ideas. They are clearly preliminary, but full of potential for positively impacting the fruitfulness of your ministry.

Clearly, there is need for much more research. Our hope is that you will join us in this process. Do you have a story that illustrates the fruitfulness of any of these principles? Others can learn from your experience. Perhaps you have tried one of these practices and found it unfruitful. Unless you share your experience, others are likely to spend valuable time and energy repeating unfruitful practices (Adams 2009). We look forward to interacting with you as we watch the Father and discover the Fruitful Practices that he is using through us to draw believers from a Muslim background to himself.

Acknowledgements

We are thankful for all the participants at the consultation who gave of their time and energy, providing so much thoughtful consideration of these issues. Don Little, David Greenlee and Rick Brown provided helpful comments on earlier versions of this article.

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APPLYING CHURCH DISCIPLINE IN AN HONOUR-SHAME CULTURE

By VP

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True worship, order, and discipline are recognized as the three essential marks of the authentic church ('Church Discipline, the Missing Mark', Mohler 1998, 172). The challenge for cross-cultural workers coming from the West is to plant indigenous churches where these essential marks are practiced according to Scripture while still allowing interpretation through the local culture and worldview. Missionaries today are finding that adapting to local patterns of worship and order (leadership, practice of sacraments, etc.) is not only more appropriate but also encourages growth in ways that using worship and order patterns imported from the West (or East) have not generally seen.

However, the last of the three essential marks – discipline, is a more formidable challenge. One significant reason for this could be that many missionaries from the West have had little personal exposure to regulative and restorative church discipline in their home churches. With little or no experience of this biblical concept in their own culture, it is hardly surprising that it causes discomfort when missionaries face teaching and/or applying it in a worldview different from their own.

Corporate discipline may be unappealing to individualistic, rights-oriented Europeans and North Americans but this idea is not foreign to the worldview of most non-Western countries where community life is more important. To overcome the challenge of planting authentic churches that exhibit all three of the true essential marks, cross-cultural missionaries need first to understand the positive, biblical purpose of church discipline. This is a good beginning to help appreciate it as a true, essential mark of an authentic church. Once we are able to value discipline in our own worldview, we will then know how to better teach and apply it in the countries where we serve.

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Church Discipline

The subject of church discipline is unpopular, complicated and even controversial for many Western Christians. The tendency is to look at discipline as a corrective action that is best left to a paid pastor of the church. Particularly in America, where the number of members in a congregation (and even on the staff) can often



be large, the idea of any type of public or corporate discipline can be considered offensive or intolerant. Western cultures put a high value on moral individualism. Personal counselling becomes a reasonable way to provide accountability for those who have made poor choices in life and/or have failed to live up to the expectations of others.

Is church discipline merely a way to punish sinners and deal with difficult members? This seems to be the negative view many Westerners hold. However, the higher and nobler goals of discipline must be considered – the most honourable being to bring glory to God through maintaining the purity and unity of the church community. This is done by the corrective and restorative discipline of any member living in sin or not in fellowship with a brother or sister in Christ. It is therefore an active demonstration of love for both the straying individual and the church body in general since the welfare, harmony and witness of the whole church are affected when sin or problem behaviours are not addressed.

An important comparison to draw from the above is what defines a *church*. In the West a *church* is an institutional ideal with buildings and paid staff. In many parts of the non-Western world a *church* is a small group of committed

people who meet together in their own homes (this may be either from necessity or preference). There are few theologically-trained pastors to lead. It is a community made up of lay people who share responsibilities. This discipline not only seems more appropriate but is often essential for maintaining the welfare of the group.

Words like ‘peacemaking’ and ‘reconciliation’ have been suggested by Dr. Rick Love as being comparable or even preferable, to the term church discipline. In his study guide entitled *Peacemaking: Resolving Conflict, Restoring and Building Harmony in Relationships*, he summarizes the purpose of peacemaking as: ‘the glory of God, the welfare of the church, and the restoration of the sinner’ (Peacemaking, 5).

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Honour and Shame Cultures

Love’s study helpfully addresses the missiological aspects of peacemaking, or discipline, and describes it as ‘one of the neglected keys to church life and church planting,’ observing that in some way it is counter-cultural in every country of the world (*Peacemaking*, ix). One aspect of the challenge for missionaries, then, is to understand the worldview building blocks that are foundational to the culture, and with this in mind, to then apply discipline biblically in their church plants. There are three commonly recognized worldviews: fear-power seen in animistic or primitive cultures, guilt-innocence found in Western cultures, and honour-shame which is considered the foundational influence throughout most of Asia, parts of the Mediterranean and is certainly predominant in North Africa and the Middle East.

Experienced missionary to the Arab world, Roland Muller, provides help in understanding honour-shame cultures through his books. These worldviews value the sense of identity in belonging to a larger social group rather than individualistic expression and rights. It is in having an association to this group and maintaining its accepted rules of order that people find value and worth. Honour comes with doing what is expected or appropriate. Shame comes, therefore, when any action occurs which causes an individual to 'lose face' before the others or reflect negatively on the group as a whole. Western systems recognize personal guilt or innocence for wrong actions. In honour-shame cultures, it is more appropriate to consider the way actions may affect others in your group. Wrongs kept hidden (even possibly lied about) are preferable because revealing them could negatively affect the collective whole. Exposing wrong actions would bring shame to both the community and the individual.

For most Westerners, honour is something that is personally achieved or earned so it can be a difficult concept to grasp in such a collective worldview. It is through these glasses, though, that honour-shame cultures form their beliefs and values. It is hard for a cultural outsider to understand the complexity of the daily responsibility of walking the fine line between 'the positive acquisition of honour, and the negative avoidance of shame' (Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle*, 37). In Eastern cultures, having a sense of shame is seen as positive; it shows self-respect and concern for proper public behaviour and opinion. Eastern cultures often find Western shamelessness shocking and incomprehensible.

The specific challenge here is how missionaries working in honour-shame cultures can teach church discipline when their understanding of such an important aspect of church life may be very different from those they are trying to teach. This Western cultural ignorance added to the reality of minimal personal experience of its practice in the missionaries' own cultures make it an intimidating task.

The Model in the First Century Church

There is, however, an excellent resource available for the study of how church discipline has been competently applied in an honour-shame culture – the New Testament itself. Moxnes, deSilva, and other biblical scholars, missiologists and anthropologists have written with considerable insight about the historical culture of the Mediterranean world, and they have identified honour-shame as the predominant worldview in that time and place. For example, Roland Allen's classic book on the Apostle Paul's missionary methods contains numerous lessons on the ways in which unity and peace were preserved in the early church.

Generally speaking, the culture of Palestine in the first century (and today) was based on honour and shame. The Greco-Roman idolatrous religion would appear to be more fear-power based, but their political system adapted to the honour-

shame system as a means to maintain the *Pax Romana* and control their vast empire. The Jewish-Semitic culture was clearly an honour-shame culture, and the Jews did what they needed to do to ensure their advancement in the secular Roman system while maintaining honour through the keeping of the Law.

The early Christian converts faced shaming techniques from both sides. The Romans denounced the dishonouring of their authority and their superior way of life. Jews used shame as a means to cause converts to see their new faith as a rejection of an inherited honourable religious tradition. New Testament scholar David deSilva describes how both Jews and Romans used shaming techniques:

The early Christians proclaimed a message and stood for values that differed from, and indeed contradicted, core values within the dominant Greco-Roman culture as well as the Jewish subculture within the church which arose. Their non-Christian neighbours, therefore, subjected the early Christians to censure and other shaming techniques, designed to bring these deviant people back in line with the values and behaviours held dear by the surrounding culture (whether Jewish or Greco-Roman). The writers of the New Testament devote much of their attention, therefore, to insulating their congregations from the effects of these shaming techniques, calling the hearers to pursue lasting honour before the court of God. (*Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, deSilva, 43)

Persecution and shaming from their families and culture were not the only reasons the early Christians formed a new community. Paul taught new believers that their identity is in Christ who took away personal shame, gave them honour before God and made them a part of his Body – the *church*. Moxnes calls this new church community a ‘surrogate or fictive family’ (‘Honor and Shame’, 172). It was important to remember that by becoming a part of this family of God, a Christian entered a relationship that transcended any of the worldly relationships they had. With this honour comes the responsibility of not bringing shame onto this family and especially not onto Christ, the one true Head or leader.

The Christians were a covenant community who were a part of their culture but not captive to it. For their own survival and good they needed to preserve unity and harmony. It was God’s responsibility to defend their honour. In this community, all were significant and there was no place for ambition, division or comparison. When one was honoured – for example, through suffering – all rejoiced with him or her. Humility and charity were Christian values not seen as favourable in honour-shame societies. Christians looked to the higher example of Christ, and above all, were to be a community characterized by love for God and for one another.

In New Testament teachings the church is given authority to practice discipline for the sake of keeping itself pure, for maintaining unity and peace, and ultimately for the glory of the name of Christ. Paul was zealous in his desire for the church to be uncompromising in this aspect. He was quick to react when the church in Corinth neglected to apply discipline in a particular case in which a church member was involved in immorality. Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18:15-20 speaks of dealing with sin within the context of the community. He uses the example of a brother who lovingly stands with a family member. His concern is not with the nature of the wrong committed but in the attitudes of the people involved in the process.

There are significant parallels between the first century church culture in Palestine and honour-shame cultures today. The shame and persecution the early Christians experienced in their societies is something Christians from honour-shame cultures today can identify more naturally than most Western missionaries. The complexities of encouraging trust and building relationships with someone outside their normal social circles are issues common in both ancient and contemporary honour-shame societies. It is safe to conclude that it may be easier for believers with honour-shame worldviews to understand the practical application of the community preserving values taught in the New Testament, including church discipline, than it is for most Westerners.

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Honour-Shame Application of Church Discipline

There is more good news for missionaries in understanding this important issue. The increase in cross-cultural workers and theologians from Asia and other countries that are honour-shame based gives an 'insider' look into this worldview and how it affects our church planting efforts. Isabelo Magalit and Josue Ganibe teach at the Asian Theological Seminary in the Philippines. Their booklet *Restoring the Fallen: Practice of Church Discipline* offers interesting insights into the thinking of honour-shame Christians on this subject:

Culture is carried from the past to the present and toward the future by our customs and traditions interacting with other dynamic forces at work within, and around us as a people. We are in culture, and culture is in us. But the most crucial thing is that we are not only recipients of culture but also active contributors to it. While we are shaped by culture, we can also re-shape and transform culture. This is true of Christians... because of their union with Jesus Christ who reigns supreme above all creative powers and value systems... (Magalit & Ganibe, 8)

Along with defining the Filipino understanding of honour and shame, Magalit and Ganibe suggest four implications to consider in applying church discipline. It is worth reflecting on their teaching.

- (1) The Christian is restored to a high position in Christ through whom their honour is regained (Jn. 1:12; Eph. 2:1-8). When they fail to walk and conduct themselves according to this higher calling, they bring dishonour and shame to themselves, to fellow Christians, and also to the Lord. (Magalit & Ganibe, 12)

Magalit and Ganibe emphasize the importance of stressing where, or from whom, honour comes for the new believer now that he or she is a part of Christ's body. Honour is 'ascribed' to us as children of God and it is our duty to uphold that honour. Being part of God's family carries with it the responsibility to live in fellowship with both our heavenly Father and our brothers and sisters in Christ. Sin that is not dealt with or unresolved disputes would bring shame to all. Restoring these relationships restores honour.

- (2) Church discipline is viewed as the corporate action of the body in obedience to the rule of Christ, to deal with the sin, unrighteousness, or moral failure of a fellow believer. Its purpose is to deal with it decisively and in such a way that the loss of glory and honour to all concerned may be restored. Not to do this is to allow that glory and honour to dissipate, risking a more serious situation where the glory and honour of the Lord departs the church. (Magalit & Ganibe, 12)

The authors clearly see discipline as an activity and responsibility of the whole body, not just certain members (or the missionaries). It is important for the community because its defined positive purpose is for the greater glory of God. They take the definition of discipline a step further by warning what happens when it is not applied. The consequences for the body as a whole are clear and serious. It is called *church* discipline after all and it is for the good of all involved. Roland Allen would contend that missionaries 'exercise discipline but leave the church undisciplined.' Paul's method was to appeal to the 'corporate conscience... he disciplined the church; we discipline individuals' (*Missionary Methods*, 124).

- (3) The biblical way to ensure restoration of lost glory and honour is through open confession of the sin (source of shame) and genuine repentance (turning away from wickedness), and restoration and recovery to the place and state from where one has fallen – a life of favour, godliness and blessing in the sight of God and his people. (Magalit & Ganibe, 12-13)

Here, the attitudes of both parties in the process are addressed. The one applying the discipline remembers the positive purpose of discipline. The one receiving must respond by confessing and repenting of their actions. One reaction common in honour-shame cultures is to shift blame when confronted as a way to save face and avoid dishonouring the group. A Christian growing and maturing in faith must learn that the honourable thing to do is look inside him or herself, examine his or her motives, and take responsibility for wrong actions. Blame-shifting and judging others do not remove the problem but rather create more. Jesus taught that it is not honourable behaviour to point out specks in others' eyes before removing the logs in our own.

A Christian growing and maturing in faith must learn that the honourable thing to do is look inside him or herself, examine his or her motives, and take responsibility for wrong actions.

Repentance should not be seen as a simple apology to make the offended feel better. There must be genuine regret for the damage caused and a desire to change and make things right again. Restitution is not to be seen as a payment of penance equal to the value of the shame (another characteristic of honour-shame cultures). Forgiveness is never earned – Christ did this on the cross – but restitution is a way to restore a relationship by showing our sincerity in repentance. Weakness and brokenness are not signs of failure but honourable ways the Lord continues his work of sanctification in his children.

- (4) Church ministers must deal with all concerned with respect, fairness, sensitivity and compassion. Though they have stumbled and hurt themselves, they should be regarded as members of God's family and dealt with with authoritative graciousness and therapeutic intent. Biblical and Filipino discipline aims not to trample down and humiliate, but to lift up and cover with love and mercy a brother or sister who has fallen. (Magalit & Ganibe, 12-13)

Magalit's and Ganibe's fourth implication gives a final observation on why properly applied discipline in the church is important. Ministers along with the church body have been given the authority to correct and reprove. The goal is never to tear down but instead to build others up in brotherly love. Encouraging relationships where this type of accountability is visible may not always be easy and may take time, but it is important if problems of gossip and lack of trust are to be overcome. Healthy community life therefore requires keeping short accounts.

Application of Church Discipline

The terminology that Magalit and Ganibe use seems to communicate biblical truths better in honour-shame cultures: cleansing, peace, trust, restoring, losing

face, protecting honour and glory, taking away or covering shame, etc. They also remind us of the simplicity of the truth of God's Word and the importance of obedience to scripture. Doing what the Bible says shows trust, while disobedience has its consequences.

Matthew 18: 15-17 is often cited as a foundation for how to deal practically with sin or problems in the body of Christ. Rick Love adapts an inverted pyramid image to illustrate this pattern of increasing levels of accountability. The smaller part of the bottom tip represents the private, one-on-one, informal confrontation. As the pyramid expands it shows the involvement of more witnesses from the church body. The large top of this upside-down pyramid represents formal public announcement and finally exclusion. Love stresses that one must not be legalistic, since it may be important to repeat the first informal steps several times to insure that the motivations behind actions are properly examined.

Attitudes are all-important. The one who confronts a brother or sister goes in private with a desire to build up in love, not tear down. Humility and patience are essential. The goal for the one being confronted is to *listen*. If they do not, the confronter is to take another witness and address the problem in the same attitude of love. Rick Love tells us the operative word for the recipient's attitude in the Matthew passage is a willingness to listen. Not listening shows a heart that is hard and unreceptive to truth. When this happens there can be no repentance. The added witness needs to be someone who is trusted. This will reduce the problems of 'misunderstanding, emotional exaggeration and half truths' that come so often, as well as the blame shifting and gossip that result (Love, 9). If, with grace, time and repetition of the first steps there is still no change, the scripture teaches to 'then tell it to the church.' This is not to shame them but

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again to protect honour for the individual and the body of Christ. Most Westerners have never seen or heard a public announcement of discipline in church. In small house groups this is really not as threatening as it may sound. It allows the church to be a part of the accountability process and to demonstrate the kind of love Christians are exhorted to show. Only when the one in sin adamantly refuses to listen, acknowledge their wrong and repent is the final step taken of public exclusion by the church.

Westerners may balk at this last step. Only in the case of one who is unrepentant is censure done before the whole assembly. The intention of this public act is to shame them into repentance. Only one who remains hard-hearted, proud and unwilling to change is shunned or excluded from the community. This shaming is for their good so that he or she may be led back to a restored relationship with God and the church. Such selfish pride shows disrespect for the values of the community, so this type of public censure is necessary to bring them back to the path that God honours. Exclusion or shunning is the last measure of social control for the church but should not be overlooked.

As Magalit and Ganibe pointed out, restoration of honour and relationships can only be done with genuine and sincere confession with repentance.

Another aspect of church discipline addressed in scripture and worthy of comment for honour-shame cultures is the problem of taking offense. When a church member has done something that is hurtful rather than sinful, it is the responsibility of the one offended to initiate the path to understanding and restore the relationship. Love qualifies that offense is not always in the same category as confrontation of sin but can lead to it. For this reason we are encouraged, in the spirit of keeping peace and unity, to go in love to the one who offended us and try to work things out. This prevents the danger of relational problems such as gossip, false accusations, selfish pride and exaggerated misunderstandings of minor issues that so often seem to lead churches to split.

Conclusions

Missionaries working in honour-shame cultures can begin with these principles gleaned from Magalit and Ganibe, Love, Allen, and others to understand the application of biblical discipline in their church planting ministries. It is better to look to the examples and wisdom of Filipino theologians Magalit and Ganibe than to follow Western models. Love's *Peacemaking: A Study Guide* goes through all scripture related to discipline, both those that are 'reactive and restorative' and those that are 'proactive and preventative.' It contains practical advice and case studies for mission workers to consider that would be beneficial for all cross-cultural church planting teams to work through together.

Allen would suggest that it is the Apostle Paul who has the most helpful words to say on this subject of church discipline in mission work. Allen has no doubt of the 'success' of Paul's methods in applying discipline or his methods in church planting in general. Paul told the church 'what they ought to do, but not in detail. He threw upon them the responsibility and trusted to them to learn in what way it was to be fulfilled' (Allen, 124). Allen warns against the missionary tendency to think 'converts are infants':

They are people who can understand principles. They understand corporate responsibility, in many ways better than we do. . . . Dependence does not train for independence, slavery does not educate men for freedom. Moreover, they have the Holy Ghost to strengthen and guide them. Christians are not only what they are by nature, they are a Spirit-bearing body. It is not a question merely of our faith in them; it is still more a question of faith in the Holy Ghost. We look too much at our converts as they are by nature: St. Paul looked at his converts as they were by grace. (Allen, 125)

Sadly, many missionaries and national church leaders that have experienced a need to apply discipline in an honour-shame culture have found it very difficult and at times disastrous. Just as there is hope for forgiveness and change for the one

who is disciplined, there is hope too for the missionary who feels the shame of his or her own failures. Allen reminds us that Paul 'succeeded through failure where we often fail through succeeding' (Allen, 124). Our first principle then is that of being committed to those things that bring glory and honour to the Lord and his Bride, the Church, trusting in the power of His Spirit to guide and help us.

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THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH IN MISSION

by **GD**

GD and his family live in the Arabian Peninsula (AP). He has looked after an international church for 8 years.

International Churches (ICs) represent a great untapped resource for evangelising the people of the AP. Yet, missionaries in the AP have often been reluctant to be involved in ICs. In fact some mission boards specifically prohibit their missionaries attending, but the time has come to engage with ICs and mobilise them for evangelism. The purpose of this article is to outline some ways an International Church might be of use in Muslim evangelism in the AP.

International Churches have numbers

In our country we have about thirty-five intentional workers, and about 35,000 expatriate Christians. What if just 1% could be equipped and motivated for outreach? The result would be 350 new intentional workers! Consider also that each of these people would already have a valid job with an accompanying visa, and would also be self-funding. The first missionary society to dedicate itself to recognising, recruiting and supporting expatriate Christians will experience exponential growth in numbers at zero financial cost.

International Churches have gifts

Most intentional teams deliberately recruit people with some interest or gift in evangelism. This results in a 'body' where every member is the mouth! However, the International Church has people with a greater variety of gifts. For example, at our annual English/Arabic Passover meal we have one person with a gift of hospitality to do the catering, one to do logistics, one to provide a venue, and so on. Unfortunately, the intentional team has an evangelist doing the cooking, an evangelist setting the tables, an evangelist giving directions...

International Churches have health

Intentional workers make up less than 20% of our congregation, but, sadly, they make up 100% of those in intense counselling. I believe that the insular and mono-cultural nature of teams creates and magnifies stress. For example, in our country no weekly team meeting has survived more than a few years or provided effective support. Each of our intense counselling cases is in fact a member of one of these weekly team meetings. It seems that a group of mouths usually end up shouting at each other. By contrast, mixed growth groups from the International Church continue over many years. People encourage and support each other over the whole of life, rather than over a narrow task.

Many intentional workers privately consider other expatriate Christians to be somehow weaker or inferior, but according to the Bible the weaker members of the body are indispensable. While many international workers consider it 'not strategic' to meet with other Christians and get involved in their petty 'unintentional lives,' there's something profoundly spiritually healthy about praying for Mrs Smith's ingrown toe-nail.

International Churches have time

Intentional workers lose a lot of their time to internal team matters, with much duplication of effort. For example, between them the thirty-five people in our country are organising about eight different conferences, all with different speakers, different kids' programs and different sets of logistics even though they each have essentially the same purpose. One poor individual known to the author is attempting to organise four different conferences just for his own organisation. If you add to this the fact that each organisation has their own strategy statements, their own prayer networks and their own international administration, then the amount of time lost in duplication of effort is immense. The end result of this is that intentional workers are the busiest people in our church, but they are not necessarily busy doing evangelism.

In contrast, many IC members have time on their hands. With shorter working hours, more help around the house and a restricted amount of family interaction, people are often bored. What if we could direct some of their time and energy to outreach?

International Churches have profile

In our country we have a steady stream of local organisations asking for our help and cooperation. The only limit to the church's cooperation with local groups is the availability of the members. Being a church gets the 'Christianity thing' right out in front. You don't have to subtly direct the conversation to spiritual issues. Local people expect something spiritual up front and immediately. Recently, our church was invited to attend a mass wedding with thirty-seven grooms and 8000 guests. A microphone was thrust into the hands of the church leader, who was asked to 'say a few words on behalf of Christians.'

International Churches have contacts

Mixed marriages provide great links to communities and families. There is a unique subculture of expat ladies married to local husbands. Many have married into significant families and will stay in the AP permanently. By effectively training and encouraging them, we could be influencing hundreds of people. This would be a great opportunity for a mixed-marriage couple to have a unique ministry!

International Churches know the local situation

This is certainly better than an office in Dallas or London! Currently, some intentional workers in our country are actually prevented from joining IC outreach efforts by company policy. Yet our outreach efforts are crying out for leaders. The policy of this particular mission is effectively stifling evangelism and service in our country. Maybe it is a region-wide policy that has good reasons in other countries, but it doesn't seem to make much sense here.

International Churches appeal to 'international locals'

We live in an international city. Many locals have studied overseas and learned English well. Many travel extensively on business, owning property in several different world cities. They have a certain amount of pride in being 'world citizens.' What could be done to reach them? Many intentional workers pottering around in their make-believe jobs or flailing away in loss-making businesses have no credibility in this particular sub-culture. Yet, highly-paid members of the international church are meeting them constantly.

Conclusion

The International Church represents a great resource for evangelism in the AP, a resource that has been largely ignored by mission societies. Working together with the IC promotes the spiritual health of missionaries, frees them to concentrate on evangelism, reaches out to a broader group of locals and is the single most efficient way to increase the number of people sharing their faith in the AP.

**PART 2:
THE ROLES OF FAMILIES AND INTERNATIONAL TEAMS
IN CHURCH PLANTING**

**DISCIPLING AND CHURCH PLANTING THROUGH
ONE'S CHURCH AND FAMILY**

by JF

After studying Arabic in Jordan, JF and his family were involved in evangelism, discipleship and church planting in the Arab Muslim community of Dearborn, Michigan, for 7 years before moving to the Arabian Peninsula, where he is a tentmaker. He and his wife are involved in local Arab social networks, participate in desert BBQs with their team for corporate witness to local and expat Muslims and they disciple growing believers. JF recently became an elder in their international church, which seeks to leverage its strategic position on the AP for the Gospel.

You are most likely reading *Seedbed* because you have an interest in seeing Arab Muslims trust in Christ and grow in their faith. Whether you are currently discipling a believer from a Muslim background (BMB) or praying to do so in the future, what goals do you have in mind for their maturity? Some of us were disciplined in one-on-one relationships, where the measure of our growth was our ability to feed ourselves and practice spiritual disciplines without depending upon others. Such familiar discipleship models as well as recent models of *Insider* ministry can promote isolation of BMBs and are therefore contrary to the goal of our mission, which is to plant churches! Gathered groups or communities of believers is the desired fruit of obeying the commission to make disciples (of the Arab Muslim nations in particular), teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded. Community provides not only the end goal, but is also critical to success during the *process* of discipleship and church planting.

The purpose of this article is to draw the reader's attention to the essential role that community plays in discipling the nations. First, I want to convince you to model the church, teach on the church and disciple towards an identifiable gathering of believers from the very beginning. Secondly, through a brief review of scriptural teaching on marriage and parenting, I hope to refresh the reader's understanding of the strategic importance of family relationships in reaching our goal of church planting, as they model the gospel, sanctification and ministry.

'Body-building' was the theme of a recent conference designed to equip members of our company and their team-mates in discipleship and church planting. The theme passage was Ephesians 2:19-22 (NIV):

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but *fellow citizens* with God's people and *members of God's household, built on*

the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole *building* is *joined together* and *rises* to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being *built together* to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

This passage uses the metaphor of *building* to illustrate what God is doing in reconciling us to Himself through Christ in the Spirit. He is not building individuals. The *underlined* words of the passage emphasize that our identity as believers reconciled to the Father is by its very nature corporate. The Apostle Paul instructs the Ephesians on two relational contexts which are crucial to the success of discipleship and church planting: *the church* and *the family*.

1. The Church

Why mention the church as a means when it is the goal? Firstly, it is actually quite easy to lose our vision of the goal. Even if severe pressures of persecution isolate BMBs, the discipler must continue to presume and teach toward the end goal, with the assumption that isolation is only a temporary exception. The church, specifically its visible manifestation in local communities of believers, is a major theme of the New Testament and a significant expression of the life of the Kingdom of God. Its birth and expansion is the subject of the book of Acts, and most of the epistles are either written to churches or about churches.

Sin, pettiness and hypocrisy among the living stones and builders of the church over the centuries have often resulted – even among missionaries – in a negative attitude toward the church.

Sin, pettiness and hypocrisy among the living stones and builders of the church over the centuries have often resulted – even among missionaries – in a negative attitude toward the church. As believers whose final authority in such matters is Scripture, we would be helped by taking God's perspective of the church, and its glorious identity and purpose! The book of Ephesians teaches us that the church is "the fullness of him who fills all in all" (1:23 ESV); his instrument for making known his manifold wisdom (3:10); and a means of glory to the Father for all generations (3:21).

We'll now look at four statements regarding the importance of the church as a critical relational context for our discipleship and church planting.

1.1. The church is vital to our identity in Christ.

Paul exhorts the Ephesians to 'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (4:3).' Regeneration by the Holy Spirit not only leads to personal justification, but places us 'in Christ' and into his body. The Spirit creates unity among believers through Christ who is our peace (2:14-17), but this unity becomes visible when believers make the effort to maintain the bond of peace. Unity in isolation is absurd! It requires a community or relational context.

Jesus taught that the visible unity of believers is an evangelistic apologetic, even in overcoming objections to the Sonship of Jesus!¹

The foundation for our unity as one body in Christ is our faith, or more accurately, *the* one faith, in the Triune God (4:4-6). Lest one conclude that isolated professions of this one faith provide the necessary unity of an invisible, universal church, Paul promotes a unity that is also expressed in visible practices, such as baptism (4:5). The water baptism commanded by Jesus² is a picture of what the Spirit has done: 'For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.'³ This work of the Spirit acknowledged in baptism joins us to other believers in the universal body of Christ, but according to 1 Corinthians 12, we cannot be walking in the Spirit if we intentionally disregard the body of Christ and neglect our service to other flesh and blood members of Christ.

The New Testament uses many terms that are corporate in nature to describe our identity in Christ. Only in relation together, not as individuals, can we be understood to be the body of Christ, a holy temple in the Lord, and the bride of Christ. If this is who we *are*, how can we be who we are in isolation? Whether we are discipling individuals or groups, we ought to teach and train toward the goal of a community of believers.

1.2. The church is an essential community context for the application of discipleship

1.2.1. We obey in the church

In discipleship, our commission is to teach disciples to obey all that Jesus commanded. A significant majority of the commands of the New Testament can only be obeyed in community!

According to the Apostle Paul, we and the BMBs we disciple can live lives worthy of our calling by being humble, gentle, patient, and bearing with one another in love (4:1-2). How can we bear with one another in love in isolation?! It is much easier to be humble and patient when alone. Ephesians 4:17 – 5:21 describes the character and holy lifestyle of the believer who has been accurately taught in Christ, and the majority of its content only makes sense in the context of relationships. The New Testament is full of 'one another' commands which describe the life of the Kingdom: 'righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.'⁴ This kingdom is not defined by words only – for example, lots of talk about sublime laws – but rather by power.⁵ The Gospel is the power of God not

1. John 17:21, 23

2. Matthew 28:19

3. 1 Corinthians 12:13, NIV

4. Romans 14:17

5. 1 Corinthians 4:20



only to save, but also to enable the obedience of those who obey the Gospel, deny themselves, and follow their Master.⁶ This power is immensely practical. Rather than merely putting on a show, like commanding a tree to be uprooted and planted in the sea, it enables a believer to forgive his brother⁷. *Community is not optional in discipleship.*

The Apostle John writes 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.'⁸ Jesus taught his disciples that the evidence of our discipleship is our love for one another.⁹ This is not manifest in a generic love for 'all believers' of the universal body of Christ, but rather in an 'instance' of the body of Christ: a local worshipping community. It is very easy to love all believers when you stay away from close relationships with them! Even our personal understanding of God's love is a corporate experience, as we grasp its dimensions 'together with all the saints (3:18).'

1.2.2. We exercise spiritual gifts in the church

The victorious Christ led in procession those he redeemed from bondage to sin, and shares with them the spoils of his triumph: spiritual gifts (4:7-8, 11). We have already noted from 1 Corinthians 12 that our identity as the body of Christ necessitates a unified function of diverse members. Body parts in isolation may serve a function in a medical school where future doctors dissect them, but not in fulfilling the great commission! Leadership gifts have been given to equip the saints to exercise their gifts in order to build up the body of Christ (4:11-12). Our unity, maturity and fullness in Christ are the result of the members of the body practicing their spiritual gifts, which can only occur in the context of community (4:13).

1.2.3. Our growth in maturity comes through mutual accountability in the church

The Bible never implies instant sanctification for believers. We who are *born* again¹⁰ long for the word as infants long for milk;¹¹ we move on to solid food¹² and leave childhood behind¹³ in our thinking, though we continue to be childlike in regards to evil¹⁴ and trust.¹⁵ The Bible presumes by these metaphors of growth

6. Philippians 2:13

7. Luke 17:3-6; 1 Corinthians 13

8. 1 John 3:14, NIV

9. John 13:34, 35

10. John 3:3

11. 1 Peter 2:2

12. Hebrews 5:12-14

13. 1 Corinthians 13:11

14. 1 Corinthians 14:20

15. Mark 10:15

that real believers will grow spiritually in an ongoing process of transformation from glory to glory.¹⁶ Paul teaches us in Ephesians that this growth does not happen in a vacuum. False teaching and the many lies that bombard us can impede our growth (4:14). By speaking to one another in love, we can mitigate the effect of the lies to which we are susceptible, that we may grow up into our Head, that is Christ. This growth is not isolated, individual spiritual growth, but corporate growth, as ‘the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (4:15-16).’ Our spiritual growth is measured by maturity displayed as a community. This emphasis on community context is not to minimize the significant impact of one-on-one discipleship, mentoring and training, such as we see in the relationship between Paul and Timothy. The goal of such relationships should be fruit in the broader context of the body of Christ, with its diversity of gifts and relationships.

We cannot assume that BMBs will understand the biblical church model of community unless they see it and/or are taught it, because it is quite distinct from the mosque. The mosque is a meeting place, but its function does not depend upon committed relationships, reconciliation and unity. A Muslim can fulfil his religious obligation in any mosque. If a believer ‘goes to church’ but with a different group every week to avoid conflict and costly relationships, they are hardly living as a disciple of Christ and fulfilling the purpose for which they were baptised by the Holy Spirit into the one body and given spiritual gifts.

There is no such thing as a ‘Christian-at-large.’ As followers of Christ we are members of one another (4:25). Which others? Practically speaking, we are members of those we are in community with, exercising our spiritual gifts, speaking to one another in love and growing up into Christ.

Of the BMBs I have known, the ones who have shown significant growth are those who were immersed in community with other believers and *watched* the body function. Those who preferred the one-on-one relationship only, or applied the ‘mosque mentality’ to their understanding of the local church, had stunted growth.

1.3. The New Testament teaches us key characteristics of the church

1.3.1. The church is identifiable

The Greek word translated ‘church’ in our English Bibles is *ekklesia*, which means ‘assembly’ and implies a literal gathering together. The invisible bonds created by the Holy Spirit that make us the body of Christ become visible in local community. The majority of the New Testament uses of *ekklesia* refer to the concrete sense of a specific assembly in a home or city, or to the actual gathering together of an assembly. Our goal in church planting must be a group that is

16. 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 12:1; 2 Peter 1:3-12

identifiable as a local assembly of believers.

Not *any* gathering of believers can count as our target goal. We should be careful not to reduce our understanding of the church to Matthew 18:20: 'For where *two or three* come together in my name, there am I with them (NIV).' Note the 'for' introducing the sentence! The passage implies that the two or three is not the church. This teaching on reconciliation and attempted restoration is not only interpersonal, but finds its ultimate application in the assembly, the church. It implies that the community of believers is not secret and elusive, but a church that is self-identified as such, and has authority to choose to exclude someone (put them on the outside). Only a community that knows who is 'inside' can then know whom it is appropriate to treat as on the 'outside'.

The 'two or three' in verse 20 refers back to the authority of agreement by multiple witnesses in verses 16 and 19 ('take one or two more' and 'if two of you shall agree...') rather than the *ekklesia* (v 17), a larger group which then treats the unrepentant person as a pagan. A significant amount of New Testament teaching addresses conflicts and sin that arise in the context of committed relationships, rather than casual contact.

My intent here is not to disparage a *small* church, but rather to discourage the acceptance of the idea that a discipler meeting with isolated believers who will not meet with other believers should be the end goal.

1.3.2. The church has identifiable leadership

Church planting emphasizes addition and inclusion, but fruitfulness requires pruning and sometimes exclusion – whether due to dissension, immoral behaviour or false teaching. The practice of church discipline helps us understand that a local church, or 'instance' of the universal church, must be identifiable for the sake of understanding who is 'inside' and who is 'outside'. It also necessitates identifiable church leadership. Church discipline is a solemn duty conducted out of concern for the rest of the flock (such concern is characteristic of a 'pastor' or 'shepherd'), by leaders who are mature (that is, 'elders'), and discerning (that is, 'overseers').¹⁷ Church discipline also involves the congregation, who then relate to the disciplined person as one on the outside.¹⁸ Identifiable leadership, of course, is not only for protective purposes, but for the ministries of the word and prayer, casting vision and equipping God's people for works of service. Leadership also includes the critical 'hands' of the elders serving as deacons. The epistles give extensive instruction on the qualifications and responsibilities of those who function as pastor/elder/overseer and deacon.¹⁹ A church can be a church without appointed

17. The terms pastor/elder/overseer describe different characteristics of leaders in the church and are not three different offices: Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-2

18. 1 Corinthians 5:11

19. 1 Timothy 3:1-12 and Titus 1:6-9 are the most explicit passages.

elders while potential leaders are growing and being affirmed by the group...²⁰ but the New Testament teaches that identifiable leadership is the goal.

1.3.3. The Church has identifiable practices

The New Testament teaching on the church includes many details on the content and conduct of gatherings of the assembly:

- To state the obvious, believers are not to forsake their gathering together!²¹
- Since the birth of the church, baptism has been recognized as the initiation rite which identifies who is 'in' the church.²²
- In the Lord's Supper, believers regularly declare their allegiance to Christ and the body.²³
- Worship practices include singing, prayer, reading of Scripture, apostolic teaching, a collection for the needy, and the functioning of the Spiritual gifts.²⁴

We should be encouraged by the evidence of God's grace even when a believer is in secret, or when we are discipling a believer who does not want to gather with others. My purpose is to keep the goal of our teaching and discipleship in mind, even when there is resistance.

1.4. We must model the church in our lives to plant it.

It is appropriate for us to evaluate the extent to which we are faithfully seeking to model being an *ekklesia* in our day to day lives. It is likely that we will reproduce our own attitudes in those we disciple.

- BMBs should sense that our spiritual life is fed by the body of Christ where we live (very few of us are so isolated that the only connection to an assembly is in our home country).
- BMBs should be able to watch us live out, with a body of believers, the 'one-another commands' that they read in the New Testament.
- BMBs should understand and observe that we live our Christian lives accountable to spiritual leaders of the church.
- BMBs should observe us serving our brothers and sisters from our local assembly. If we missionaries are 'too busy' with ministry to serve one another practically, then we will reproduce this attitude in the church we seek to plant.

20. The fact that Titus was to appoint elders for every town in Crete implies that there were churches which did not yet have elders (Titus 1:5).

21. Hebrews 10:25

22. 1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:38, 41; 9:18; 10:47; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 22:16

23. 1 Corinthians 11:23-34

24. Ephesians 5:19; Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 4:13; 1 Corinthians 12, 14, 16;

Consider the discipler who meets with a church planting team for strategy and prayer, and also participates in an expatriate church where they take communion, yet keeps the church group at arm's-length. BMBs who observe this situation may adopt an attitude that the local church you are seeking to plant with them is unimportant compared to ministry outreach and para-church activity.

Our spouses and children are not burdens which distract us from the 'real work'. They are the real work!

2. The Family

Our lives are very ministry-focused. We read books on ministry. We talk to churches about ministry and reaching Muslims to raise support. We write newsletters to our supporters about ministry. We have an identity with our team and our company that is centred on ministry in a very challenging cross-cultural context. But what about our spouses? What about our children? Where do they fit in?

Our spouses and children are not burdens which distract us from the 'real work'. They *are* the real work! If we neglect them for the sake of ministry, this will be at great cost not only to our families themselves, but also to our ministry, and to the church we are seeking to plant.

Among the very first instructions we should give to a BMB on their first steps of obedience is in the relational contexts of marriage and family.²⁵

- Is he or she a youth, or still living in close proximity to their parents? We must teach them to honour their father and mother. This 'first command with a promise' holds the greatest potential for longevity and peace with their family (6:1-3).
- Is she married? Instruct her in the biblical teaching on submission and respect for her husband, giving her a vision that she might win her husband 'without words'²⁶ by her behaviour (5:22-24).
- Is he married? Instruct him in the biblical teaching to love his wife as Christ loved the church; treating her with understanding²⁷ while nourishing and cherishing her (5:25-31).

Yes, we need to teach these passages, but more importantly for our end goal, we need to *live* them.

The Apostle Paul did not happen upon marriage as a convenient analogy for the relationship between Christ and his church. Rather, God himself created marriage to be an illustration of the relationship between Christ and the church (5:31-33)!

Husband, do you want to do church planting? Love your wife. Even when she's not lovely! In this way you imitate your Master, who loves his bride – the

25. Ephesians 6:5-8 provides an additional significant relational context in the wider community where instruction is essential for fruitful living: work.

26. 1 Peter 3:1-6

27. 1 Peter 3:7

church – in spite of her blemishes. God uses your wife's unloveliness or lack of submission to expose sin in your heart, and lead you to the cross so that his Spirit may sanctify you!

Wife, do you want to plant churches? Submit to and respect your husband. You will be modelling how the church relates to Christ! God uses your husband's incomplete love to expose sin in your heart, and lead you to the cross, that his Spirit may sanctify you!

It is God's design that your marriage picture the Gospel in the home, with the husband embodying the sacrificial love of Christ, the wife personifying the response of the church and both showing the fruit of the Gospel as each allows the Spirit to use their partner's weaknesses to sanctify the other. Marriage is a catalyst for sanctification in our lives where the power of the Gospel is demonstrated.

Parenting is another context requiring not only instruction to the BMB, but also modelling by the discipler and church planter. As workers sent by churches to the field, labouring to see the church established, we are in *de facto* positions of church leadership. The sobering qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:4-5 apply to us: 'He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)' The accountability of fathers to bring up their children in the Lord (6:4) cannot be delegated, nor dismissed with an excuse of having a higher calling of planting churches. The issue of parenting is not simply one of avoiding disqualification, but modelling God's character – to your children, to the lost and to the church. God does not call himself *Father* because he discovered that earthly fathers provide a convenient model to help us understand his nature (3:14). Rather he created fatherhood to reflect his nature!²⁸

Ministry is a very easy vehicle for exasperating our children and provoking them to anger through neglect. Beware of a 'family versus ministry' dichotomy. Our calling as Christian fathers and mothers is also to minister to our families. Intentional ministry to your spouse and children is not only biblically required, it is very fruitful in church planting!

Mothers and fathers, I hope your goal is not simply to survive the growth of your children. God desires that you raise your children in the Lord with a view not to their eventually leaving your home, but a view of their children, and their children's children!²⁹ Through your marriage and parenting you have the potential to reach 1,000 generations!³⁰

One useful vehicle for bringing your children up in the instruction of the Lord is practicing the corporate spiritual discipline of 'family worship' through a

28. Mothers also reflect God's image and likeness in the care of their children. See Isaiah 49:15.

29. Psalm 78:3-8

30. Exodus 20:6

combination of reading, praying, scripture memory, and singing together. Besides being a vehicle for spiritual leadership of the family, family worship is something that BMBs need to see, so that they can have the tools to pass their faith to their children.

A clear request from BMBs given at a regional partnership event was, 'Show us how to do marriage and family, and we can figure out the church.' Church planters should not view the church, their spouse and children as obstacles to ministry.

Hospitality provides an excellent vehicle for multi-dimensional ministry. Families can work together in preparation for visitors. Children can enjoy relating to guests and be trained in serving others. BMBs can see from the inside how a Christian home functions as they observe our marriage and parenting. The antidote to the mess of 'dysfunctional families' and baggage is biblical teaching and wisdom. BMBs need *living* books on marriage and parenting: your lives!

If the reader is single, this teaching on marriage and parenting is still relevant to you because you have colleagues who are married with children who need encouragement in these areas. Also, the BMBs you disciple will need instruction in this, and you yourself may marry some day! Community among churches and teams is enhanced when families integrate singles into their lives and family activities. Realize that married church planters appreciate the greater availability their single colleagues have for ministry, and may hesitate to interrupt that activity for 'family time.' As in many aspects of our faith, the married and single could each take greater initiative toward the other, rather than expecting the other to make the first move.

Conclusion

In the past few decades, the Lord has shown us that he is building (and restoring) His church even in resistant Muslim countries. To fulfil our stated vision of planting churches, it is essential that we understand what the church is, and that the community nature of the church be evident in our lives, teaching, and discipleship practices from the very beginning so that we don't miss our target and produce believers who are content in isolation. The intense nature of our ministry can put our families at risk as we wrestle with the priorities of ministry, family and work. Marriage and parenting our children are themselves strategic callings in the contexts of our personal lives and families, as well as in planting churches.

A clear request from BMBs given at a regional partnership event was, 'Show us how to do marriage and family, and we can figure out the church.' Church planters should not view the church, their spouse and children as obstacles to ministry. Given their proper place in our lives, they will enhance our fruitfulness because the church and our families are vehicles for the Gospel and church planting.

MANAGING CHANGE IN MISSION FAMILIES

by **Marion Knell**

Marion and Bryan Knell were well known to AWM company members for many years. Bryan was the UK national director (until 1999) and Marion served as a consultant to families. Marion has written two books to help missionary kids and their parents (see references below) and serves in a number of international bodies as a specialist in TCK care. She also works as a consultant for a secular international relocation company.

‘A bend in the road is not the end of the road – unless you fail to make the turn.’ So goes one definition of change. One word that Third Culture kids associate with change is ‘constant’. Change is a regular feature of their lives. The average TCK makes at least eight major moves before the age of 18 – a major move occurs each time you go in and out of a culture. With more frequent home assignments, that figure is increasing. Small wonder that among the ways of recognising that you’re a TCK (you flew before you could walk, you keep dreaming of a green Christmas, you have a time-zone map next to the phone) is that ‘You’d rather never say hello than have to say goodbye’.

Change is always stressful, and stress is intensified by two things – the period of time involved (the shorter the time, the more painful it is), and the degree of difference between the beginning and end – so cultural change is very stressful.

We want our mission families to not just survive but to thrive in their extremely mobile environments. Ted Ward in the article ‘The MK’s Advantage – 3 Cultural Contexts’ says this: ‘Every time you hear the word ‘survive’ replace it with the word thrive. Because growing up overseas gives the flexibility of intercultural experience, the concrete awareness of what the world is really like and the multilingual and international experience, TCKs are well-equipped to cope in today’s global marketplace’.¹

1. Why should we focus on the families of missionaries?

1.1. Because people go with families, marry on the field and have families, and return home with families.

Many mission organisations these days take more care for their youngest, most innocent members, but there still exists within the church this overall lack of regard. When I try to explain the need to take care of missionaries children to ‘the folks back home’ their eyes glaze over and they soon tire of the subject. Tales of emotional adjustment are not nearly as exciting as those

1. A presentation given at ICMK Quito, January, 1987.

about angels protecting missionaries in the jungle or heathen converts burning idols. Lost MK souls don't seem to 'count' as much as lost souls in faraway lands.

(A quotation from the article 'Anger's story' by Deborah Kartheiser published in *Among Worlds*, Summer 2001)

1.2. Because how we treat them reflects well/badly on the agency, and that impacts support and people-raising.

A study was carried out in 1994 by MK CART/CORE (Consultant and Research Team/Committee on Research and Endowment) among 10,000 Adult MKs (AMKs). The 'climate' of a mission organisation impacts an AMK's life positively when they perceive it as:

- Rewarding good work rather than simply criticising wrong-doing
- Projecting a feeling of friendliness, mutual trust and good relations as the norm at work
- Reflecting a membership that accepts direction from qualified leaders
- Being organisationally well run
- Allowing members the freedom to make decisions and solve problems within their range of responsibility without checking with superiors each step of the way

Bad news travels fast and so does a bad reputation.

1.3. Because of the attrition figures.

In a world survey, when the main reasons were given for missionaries leaving the field prematurely, marriage and family came third, but children came *second*.

Within the UK, the proportion was even higher. Obviously, the reasons presented and the real reasons are not always the same – it's more acceptable to say you're coming home because of the children than because you're not getting on with your colleagues or the local church (See: *Too Valuable to Lose*, Taylor, 92). The sad thing is that many families come home for the wrong reasons and because they have been misinformed. It takes a lot to get a family on the field; how much better, would be to put in place supports which prevent them leaving early. Some of that support has to come in the form of information.

It takes a lot to get a family on the field; how much better, then, would it be to put in place supports which prevent them leaving early.

1.4. Because of current family values and their implication for selection.

Sacrifice is not a popular word – nor should it be in some senses. People are not willing to sacrifice their families to their work as did William Carey, pioneer

missionary to India. They do not come to us with a 'what can we do for you' attitude, but rather, 'what can you do for us?' If you want to recruit people from the under 30s age group, then member care, and in particular care for the family, has to be at the top of your priority. One Bible College-trained man said, 'Jesus never said we should leave our wives and children.' No? What about Jesus' words 'Whoever has left home and brothers or sisters...' ? (Admittedly, Jesus' teaching there is about what is most important.)

Yet, many people today come into missions with a 'family first' attitude and everything else has to fit in around that. That can actually stifle missionary enterprise. This represents a swing of the pendulum away from the extreme of previous generations, in which sacrificing the well-being of one's family was expected by everyone. Of course, one of the reasons for this new 'family first' attitude is that many people of their generation come from broken homes and are determined not to make the same mistakes as their parents. Rather than disqualify them for missionary service we need to ask how we can equip them to cope well with their families and thus help allay their fears.

Mission agencies need to show that they are sensitive to family issues. It's no good giving the impression that candidates who take their families seriously are not fully surrendered to Christ or suitable for world missions. If you are serious about recruiting the next generation of missionaries, then you have to take family considerations seriously.

In this article we will be looking at ways we can assist and empower families to manage change. How do we give geographically rootless TCKs a sense of belonging? How do we equip parents to provide stability and confidence in change? Dr Marjory Foyle has said: 'If the family foundation is healthy, that gives children a handle by which they can cope with the stresses and changes in life' (Personal conversation).

What do we want to do?

- Look at the big picture. Often, concern for the family focuses on education or spiritual issues, but there's a lot more involved. There has been a considerable shift in the attitude of young missionary families, sometimes called 'family-firsters'. If you look at the history of world missions there are some dreadful tales of how families, particularly children, were treated. People are now much more protective of their families.
- Consider the process of going overseas. We will look at what happens to a family, the dynamics of change, and what they can reasonably expect in the light of previous studies on the subject.
- Explore the implications for kids: being a TCK is a lifetime experience, it is rich, it makes you someone different, it has its own challenges and benefits.

- Explore the implications for parents: the impact of the choices they make for themselves and their children, their responsibilities, the priority of their relationship.
- Explore the implications for the whole family: the extended family and their involvement, the concerns for those left behind, and factors in decision-making.
- Review the possibilities: knowledge empowers, so the greater the level of information the more informed are the choices. Several MKs speak of the 'delusion of choice' – having decisions made for them over which they had no control and in which they had no voice.
- Ensure preparation – of kids, parents, family, sending church and agency.
- Develop long-term planning – assignments may be shorter, but still the effects of decisions made can be far-reaching.
- Encourage the maximum benefit to be achieved.

I've subtitled my book *Growing up Overseas and Loving it*. Sometimes the experience of growing up overseas gets negative press, but overwhelmingly my studies showed that people valued the experience – even while acknowledging the pain. The following quotes come from research for the book:

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'I count it a real privilege to have been brought up overseas and loved in another culture.'

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'I count it a real privilege to have been brought up overseas and loved in another culture. It has been a major influence on my character, making me more broad-minded than my contemporaries and giving me a certain amount of empathy and understanding in supporting missionaries through our church.'

'I am very glad that I am an MK. I would not change it for anything. I want to go overseas myself.'

'Living overseas was an invaluable experience which I am lucky to have enjoyed.'

'I love living like this!'

2. Understanding Third Culture Kids

In order to look at managing change, we have to start with understanding what it means to be a Third Culture Kid. Many are familiar with Dave Pollock's definition of a TCK:

A TCK is an individual who, having spent a significant part of the developmental years growing up in a culture other than the parents' culture, develops a sense of relationship to all of the cultures whilst not having full ownership of any. Elements from each culture are incorporated into the life experience, but the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar experience. (*Third Culture Kids*, 19)

The writer Ruth van Reken has broadened the study to encompass a larger group – CCKs – Cross-Cultural Kids. Her definition is: ‘A cross-cultural kid is a person who has lived in – or meaningfully interacted with – two or more cultural environments for a significant period during the developmental years.’ This larger group of CCKs includes: (See: www.crossculturalkid.org):

- Traditional TCKs: children who move into another culture with the parents due to parents’ career choice.
- Bi-multicultural and/or bi/multi-racial children.
- Children of immigrants: children who have made a permanent move to new country where they were not originally citizens.
- Children of minorities: children whose parents are from a racial or ethnic group which is not part of the majority race or ethnicity of the country in which they live.
- International adoptees: children adopted by parents from another country other than the one of that child’s birth.
- ‘Domestic’ TCKs: children whose parents have moved in or among various subcultures within that child’s home country.

It is helpful to note that children are often in more than one of these circles at the same time (e.g. a traditional TCK who is also from a minority group; a child of immigrants whose parents are from two different cultures, etc). This helps us to understand the growing complexity of issues we face in our changing world.

A cross-cultural kid is a person who has lived in – or meaningfully interacted with – two or more cultural environments for a significant period during the developmental years.

Questions:

1. Mobility gives confidence in change, but how do you give TCKs roots in a sea of change?
2. Adaptability means you learn to cope and become flexible, but when does the strain become too much and the elastic snap?
3. Having extensive relationship banks means you have friends everywhere, but how do you learn to make commitments that will last?
4. Knowing the importance of ‘now’ means you make the most of the present, but how do you plan long-term decisions, like college courses and careers?
5. Having world perspective means you understand the breadth of cultures and tastes, but how do you evaluate your own culture without becoming judgmental?
6. Speaking more than one language is a tremendous asset, but how do you ensure mastery of the mother tongue or adequate proficiency in either language?

It is as we learn to answer those questions that we learn how to help equip families to manage the changes they face. We do this by helping them to: (1) think biblically – about parenting, marriage and mission, and (2) think strategically – what skills do we need? What resources can we use? Who can or should help us? What was your experience the last time you moved?

Expatriate
breakdown tends not
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Helping missionary families handle change well will keep many of them in ministry much longer. As Marjory Foyle has noted, 'Expatriate breakdown tends not to be a phenomenon of expatriate employees themselves but rather of their spouse and children' (Anon 1998 study quoted by Marjory Foyle in her thesis for *Honourably Wounded* 2nd edition).

I want to look at the subject under three area headings: preparing for change, continuity in change and integrating change. Essentially, this covers three stages in the missionary family/missionary kid's career – (1) what you can do pre-field, (2) what you can do on-field, and (3) what you can do on re-entry.

3. Preparing for change

Marjory Foyle says that two things are necessary for the well-being of a missionary family: an assurance of God's will and a firm foundation for family life. Not family *or* ministry, but family in ministry. This has implications for us at the stage of selection. Is the call shared jointly by both husband and wife? It is very dangerous to send a couple when the wife is merely 'following her husband'. Both need to know that this is God's will for them as a family.

A firm foundation for family life means having the necessary skills and confidence to build your family.

3.1 Prepare the parents

3.1.1. Relationship skills

As has been remarked, Gen Xers often have very poor role models in this area, so it is good to put some strategies in place before they go. Parents need help in relationship skills. For an MK, home is to be found in their parents' relationship, the place where they find their security and well being. Because of this, it is of paramount importance that couples put their own relationship at the top of their list of priorities and nourish it. What resources do personnel officers have at their disposal to help people develop their relationships before they go overseas? Many will be living in societies where it is very difficult to find time together or to relax in the way they have back home. In a people-oriented culture, you're in a fish bowl – people drop in at all hours, everyone knows what's going on. It may not be the norm for couples to go out together – how much do you help people to

think these issues through before they go, and to develop appropriate coping strategies?

The CART study concluded: ‘The research confirmed that parents play an all-important role in shaping the lives of the adults their children become. Their life-model, the training they give and the relationship they foster with their children during the formative years contribute significantly to the overall well-being of the adult MK’. (*Interact*, May 1994, 6)

3.1.2. Parenting skills

Many couples come from broken homes or single-parent families and have not had the examples of conflict resolution, unconditional love and good discipline to follow. Before they go, we need to think through with candidates what skills they may need to develop in this area and what tools and resources are open to them. What were the childhood messages they received? These are likely to be passed on now that the couple are adults, unless critiqued. Increasingly, cross-cultural marriages are the norm in missions. When children come along your own culture comes most to the fore – we parent according to our cultural norms, and it can be a source of some tension in cross-cultural marriage.

Similarly, cross-cultural marriages may need special help when the husband and wife are coping with the differences between each other’s cultures. Both parties may cope whilst in a neutral country, but they may come under severe strain when trying to live in either of their home cultures. The child can suffer from enhanced identity problems when the parents are not really sure where they belong.

Marjory Foyle suggests that the healthy family platform consists of balance, affirmation, understanding, communication, constant discipline, caring and love. (*Families on the Move*, 33-40)

Very often it is in the area of parenting that conflicts arise within teams. Our parenting is cultural and we can tend to measure the success of our ministry by how well our children are doing. It is important that as Christians we do not allow our children to become ego-supportive. If they are going on with the Lord, we recognise the grace of God. If they decide to choose a different path, that is their choice – Proverbs 22:6 is a general observation, not a promise.

Again, the CART study concluded:

Parenting styles with positive correlation included:

- Involving children in decision-making
- Encouraging children to hold their own viewpoints and explore new ideas
- Spending time with children and making them feel that what they do is important

It is important that as Christians we do not allow our children to become ego-supportive. If they are going on with the Lord, we recognise the grace of God.

- Supporting children even when they make poor decisions
 - Communicating openly within the family
- Poor parenting styles included:
- Parents acting distant when the child has disappointed them
 - Using guilt or shame as punishment
 - Setting few rules and letting children act as they please
 - Using force to make children conform
 - Being too busy to answer questions
 - Acting as though the children were an annoyance or making them feel foolish

Adults need to understand parenting skills with respect to the fact that they are parenting overseas, and they need to take in all the dimensions that this cross-cultural reality includes. Do you have a book like my *Families on the Move* on your recommended reading list for parents? Forewarned is forearmed. A number of parents who've come home after a term overseas read the book and then say, 'I only wish I'd known this 4 years ago.'

3.1.3. Child Development

The CART study concluded:

Supplying parents with information about appropriate expectations and different needs of the child at various stages of his development and how parenting style needs to adjust accordingly is pertinent information. Clearly articulating mission expectations and policies regarding MK and family issues is essential to understanding what is acceptable, normal and right in mission culture. (*Interact*, May 1994)

It is important for parents to know the 'normal' stages of child development. When your child is undergoing changes, stressful ones at that, it's important to be able to distinguish between normal stress and cultural stress. There are the terrible twos no matter where you are, along with adolescence. It's easy to get paranoid in an isolated situation when you have no benchmarks and no supportive community (such as mums and toddlers or your church community). What is more, experience tells us that Christians back home are not averse to criticising parents for taking children overseas.

Paranoid parents have got to be helped. They think they've hurt their kids. They think God goofed. They think somehow God has to separately call everybody at every minute at every hour to every altitude, latitude, longitude and attitude. That has got to be a lot of bunk. Our God has called ALL of us into this world

to be ministering persons in cultures. Whether I'm locked into some gosh awful subcultural context in North America or some other in the world, what's the difference?

(Ted Ward, 'The MK's Advantage: Three Cultural Contexts' in *The Family in Mission*)

Part of change and cross-cultural transition is helping people to critique their own culture as well as the next. TCKs are often critical of their own culture and need help to adjust to the changes it brings.

3.2 Prepare the child

I notice that many missions have an orientation course for parents during which the kids are looked after but not given their own orientation. I think this is a big mistake and a golden opportunity missed. These children are going through a massive change. Whether or not their parents make it and how long they stay will depend on how well the kids did.

The most important thing is to communicate – tell them how it is, what it will be like out there; allow them to ask questions; counteract any wrong impressions they may have gathered; investigate, using the web, libraries and pre-field visits.

Secondly, children need permission and ways to express emotions, to say how they feel. Children should be interviewed on their own. *Harold and Stanley Say Goodbye*, by Jill Dyer, is an excellent book for small children. Using hand puppets or stories helps too.

Thirdly, children need to be given a voice. Many MKs say they feel like victims – decisions were made which profoundly affected them but over which they had no choice or voice. The older the child gets the more important it is to involve them in decision-making. It is wise to think twice before taking adolescents overseas for the first time. Consider moving times and assignments in relation to the whole family life-cycle. What mechanism exists in your mission for children to have a voice?

3.3 Prepare the extended family

Grandparents in particular want to be involved and to understand what is happening. The biological family, church family and mission agency all have a part to play; they are going to be some of the stable influences in the midst of all this change. This means educating them on what it means to be a TCK, discussing how they can participate actively, investigating pastoral care of those left behind and inclusion at significant events.

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These children are going through a massive change. Whether or not their parents make it and how long they stay will depend on how well the kids did.

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The total missions community has to gather considerable resources to do everything possible to build good marriages and satisfying family life among missionaries. Some field leaders may have to revise demands. Some may have to move family development higher up on the priority ladder. If they do, isn't Christ strong enough to keep families on the missionary firing line, while at the same time giving them a wonderfully satisfying family life? (The CART study, *Interact*, May 1994)

4. Continuity in Change

One of the big challenges for missionary families is continuity. These changes are made once every two to four years – these days people come 'home' more often. Bridges need to be built during the time families are away that will sustain relationships, ease transition and sustain them during their time overseas.

Let's take it one step back. Everyone has to decide when they go overseas how closely they are going to identify with the local culture – the closer you identify the harder it is to re-enter. The more rigid the culture the harder it is. The following considerations should be borne in mind when making the decision on integration:

1. Educational considerations: the culture of school, ethos of school, the degree of continuity with system back home, time commitment for parents, social interaction of child
2. Life-style considerations: what will aid integration to the community, what is fair to the children, language acquisition, living privately or living in the community
3. Faith issues: what opportunity is there to worship, how is family life expressed, job demands and ministry possibilities and resulting conflicts

When those decisions have been made, a strategy for bridge-building back into the passport culture can begin. Many missionaries have identified so closely with their host culture that their children have considerable difficulty when it comes to going 'home'. This is much harder for cross-cultural marriages where the couple cannot decide where home is.

Building Bridges can be built by:

- Communication – letter, Skype, email
- Feasts and festivals – celebrating national days, family days
- Rituals and routines – maintaining routines that transcend culture
- Sacred objects – keeping things that are precious
- Visits – from home, church, family

- Educational link – a professional update on education
- Link Family – close links with a family with kids of similar ages
- Family time – prioritising time together
- Extended family – involving the extended family
- Life story books – compiling a personal history
- Tapes, videos, scrapbooks – receiving up-to-date, age-appropriate literature

This can be reinforced when planning for home assignments, another major source of change for mission families. Most families I know hate HMA. It's stressful, tiring and full of unrealistic expectations.

5. Home assignments

It is vital to have clear objectives – personally, professionally, as a family, for the children – and to plan with them in mind. Bear in mind that this is not home; not only will the children find the home country strange, people will find them strange. Even parents have lost contact through time and distance.

Lastly, to think positively, a home assignment is an opportunity to connect. Here are some helpful hints:

- Have a base – don't live out of a suitcase
- Do the 'national trail' – explore your country
- Forge educational links
- Take advantage of spiritual opportunities
- Minimise travelling – have central venues to meet people so they can come to you
- Participate in secular activities – films, clubs, sports, and drama
- Teach skills not needed in host culture
- Book health check-ups and educational testing.

6. Preparation for re-entry

The biggest change of all is on the final return. When I was in the process of writing a book on re-entry, reading the questionnaires was a painful exercise. It is alarming how many people come back with no preparation, no idea of what reverse culture shock is, no tools to help them get back into their home culture. Because they look as though they belong, everyone assumes they know what the score is. There are tragic tales of MKs who got into trouble, were injured because they didn't know how to handle stuff, and didn't like to appear dumb and ask questions. The first thing to tell a returning MK is that there is no question too dumb to ask.

It is alarming how many people come back with no preparation, no idea of what reverse culture shock is, no tools to help them get back into their home culture. Because they look as though they belong, everyone assumes they know what the score is.

We help TCKs deal with anger, grief, bitterness, loss and separation by giving them permission to feel pain and permission to express their feelings. We help them find helpful ways to say goodbye and people with whom they can share their experiences. One TCK wrote:

Our parents experience an incredible amount of stress... particularly in the midst of transitions. We find ourselves questioning if they really care or love us. All we know is that we are confused, feeling alone and perhaps hurting over the last goodbye, but no one around seems to take notice... let alone care. And those who should be closest to us – our parents – are dealing with the same issues and may not be able to give the care we would assume. Unfortunately parents often don't realise what is going on. I don't hear too many parents say, 'Son, I'm sorry but we're in the midst of transition and can't give to you like we should.' Instead there is that eerie silence and we assume we are not loved and shove it all down inside. ('Bitterness – the hidden time bomb' by Matthew Neigh in *Among Worlds*, Summer 2001, 8)

Another expressed it this way:

'We all have to deal with grief sometime in our lives. Friendships are broken, relationships destroyed, because of situations beyond our control. Love is something to be cherished, to be held deep within our hearts. Sometimes it is almost unbearable to say goodbye, when I hold that person for what may be the very last time in my life. The grief I'm feeling comes out in the form of tears cascading from my eyes.' (Bitterness, *ibid*, 6)

Concluding Thought

In the following excerpts from her poem, Ruth Goring sums it up well (MTI/Children Intercultural Programme):

'I am Green'

I. I wish

Growing up between two cultures

Is a tense

Liberating, frustrating,

Bruising, hilarious, exciting

Experience

.....

IV. I am Green

One life is navy blue

One life is sunshine yellow

I am green

Is there a place

Where

I can be green?

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Online Magazine for TCKs: <http://www.denizen-mag.com>

Among Worlds: magazine for adult TCKs, <http://www.interactionintl.org/amongworlds.asp>

A very active TCK online community: <http://www.tckid.com/group/about>

Dedicated to support and understanding of TCKs:

<http://www.crossculturalkid.org> and <http://www.interactionintl.org/home.asp>

MORE THAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE: OTHER DIFFERENCES WITH MAJORITY WORLD WORKERS

Adapted for *Seedbed* from a paper presented to the May 2007 Chinese Arab Partnership

By Xiao (Howard) Wu

Xiao Wu has lived and served with his family in the Middle East for a number of years. He is a university lecturer and has both Chinese and Western heritage and experience.

Summary

Globalization of our workforce through recruitment and placement of Majority World Workers (MWWs) is seen as one important means of increasing our numbers in order to help reap the emerging harvest in the Arab World. However, the integration of these MWWs into our organization presents many challenges. Language and culture differences are obvious when working in a multi-national team setting even from just Western nations. What are less apparent are differences rooted in lifestyle, economics, national identity and models of missions that become evident as workers from non-Western nations seek to become part of our teams. These differences contribute to a 'team integration' distance that in some cases may result in more effort than benefit. Understanding these differences enables us to see the difficulty of embracing MWWs from a rural background, such as from mainland China, into our existing AWM teams. Alternative team and leadership structures should be considered, in such cases, where the integration distance is too great.

Background for this Article

This article arose in response to numerous inquiries AWM received from agents representing rural house churches in China. The possibility of hundreds of workers (not tens of thousands, as suggested in *The Heavenly Man*), from rural house churches in China, might join us in the harvest certainly stirs the heart. Yet the feasibility of working side-by-side with rural Majority World Workers (MWWs), such as these Chinese, is unrealistic in many respects. In support of those inquiries, an ethnographic study was conducted in an upper Gulf country in early 2006 to gain some understanding of what could be done to support these potential workers.

After some difficult experiences with our early placements from majority world partnerships developed by the director of Global Mobilization, AWM leadership in April 2008 decided to re-emphasize the long-standing requirement

on all incoming MWWs that they be able to function well in English. This decision, though not stating it directly, suggests that there is an implicit understanding that the MWW recruitment focus should also be on those who have a better socio-economic and educational fit with the current AWM membership.

My original study, written two years ago, focused on the vast differences between the rural house church in China and a western mission such as ours. The contrast was deliberately extreme – rural farmers with a middle school education who were trying to enter the upper Gulf where most of our workers are highly skilled professionals. I have deemphasized this extreme contrast to make this article more accessible to our broader membership. However, most of my examples from a limited number of data points come from this experience in trying to place rural house church workers from China.

I claim no expertise on this matter of globalization but report to you our observations based on our experiences working to place both partners and non-affiliated MWWs in the greater work of reaching Muslims of the Arab World.

Introduction

The premise of this article is that the distance in operating philosophy and background determines the likelihood of team integration. Another assumption is that MWWs are joining our existing teams, not a new team structure created to deal specifically with such differences. That is, until now, we are seeking the globalization of our existing organization rather than organizing ourselves to welcome a global workforce. Globalization to AWM means bringing in Majority World workers who have similar socio-economic and educational backgrounds as do our existing membership. In contrast, emergent missions movements advocate the empowerment of churches in the majority world, which strongly implies welcoming MWWs of a broader socio-economic and educational background. The rural mainland China house church would fall into the latter category while business people and professionals from the mainland China urban church fall into the former.

When comparing two cultures, we often speak of *cultural distance* to describe how much cultural differences must be bridged to effectively communicate and work together. The dimensions of cultural distance are often based on analyses such as Hofstede's *Framework for Assessing (the) Culture of a population*, which are small versus large power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance and long term versus short-term

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orientation. These are attributes of a community at large. At the operational level of a team, there are other very significant dimensions that come into play, and it is these other aspects that are the focus of this article. These differences create an operational distance among team members. This article identifies some of these differences before discussing their implications.

Operational Differences

The lists of characteristics described in this section impose operational distance as the differences on each dimension increase. The concept is that the cumulative effect of these differences creates a 'team integration' barrier. The extreme case (e.g., rural house church of China) is used for illustrative purposes as mentioned previously to emphasize the differences. These differences are more subtle when integrating MWWs from a socio-economic and educational background more similar to our existing AWM membership. Yet that similarity may often mask the inherent differences that exist. I assume these subtle differences can be bridged when we have an adequate understanding of their existence.¹

1. Language

In AWM, the language of team communication is English, and the April 2008 decision was to continue this strategic policy. This means that new MWWs will have to communicate in at least their second, but most likely, in their third or fourth language. This barrier is known. Even groups sending workers from rural China realize that English is a necessity and the training has been adjusted (and lengthened) to reflect this reality. English fluency will certainly make team life easier for us (those already on teams). Yet language fluency will inevitably be limited to select topics and most certainly will not include the deeper subjects that govern norms, behaviour and worldview.

2. Culture

Hofstede's cultural dimensions are only the start. Honour versus shame culture, and all the ramifications that come with this cultural contrast, also come into play. Honour and shame are concepts inherent to many Asians, even those who are many generations removed from their motherland. Hierarchical societies and the views on leadership also come into play. There are of course vast differences amongst cultures with respect to shame and to which areas of life it may apply.

1. The presumption is that globalization brings additional resources to bear in fulfilling our church-planting mission. Left unanswered in this article is the question as to whether MWWs bring skills and gifts that don't already exist in our teams (i.e., complementary role) or whether they just add additional resources with skills similar to ones that exist. Also left unanswered is the question of the future role of existing members in a globalized organization. If the goal set by David Lundy at Interface is met, the doubling of our field workers in the next five years is likely to include a very large number of MWWs (though probably not from rural areas).

For example, we generalize to say that the Arab concept of 'wasta' is the same as Chinese 'guanxi'. While both are vastly different from Western 'networking', there are significant differences (ask me, and I will send you an academic paper that spells them out).

However, the general parameters are known to those knowledgeable in cross-cultural studies and need not be repeated here. Teams can be trained to work on communication skills that help bridge these cultural dimensions including what to expect from those who grew up in a shame culture. Remember that those who grow up in a shame culture may find it difficult to articulate what for them is second nature and oftentimes unaware that they exhibit such behaviour.

3. Educational Background and Life Experiences

In the case of rural cross-cultural workers from China, it is not just the ramifications of a middle-school education compared to the multi-degree background of workers from western agencies like ours, who work in the upper Gulf. Life experience plays a big part. Most have not left their villages let alone travelled internationally. They have little experience within a multi-ethnic society and don't have experience navigating amongst different cultures. Those from the mono-cultural Midwestern United States probably have culture shock when going to multi-ethnic Los Angeles. Imagine the shock of a rural Chinese evangelist moving into a Gulf country.

4. Problem-Solving Approach

While Asians may be known for the cautious and consensual decision-making of the past, times are changing. Asian cultures, such as in Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and now, mainland China, are increasingly exhibiting fast-paced adaptation. They live busy lives representing to some degree the fast-paced economic conditions in which they have grown up. They want to move quickly and expect quick answers. The 80/20 rule applies: Learn the bare minimum as quickly as you can and adapt when you get there. Many Korean workers demonstrate this ethos (e.g., get to the field and then figure out how to get a visa and educate their children). They are to be admired for their zeal but how do Westerners cope with such uncertainty and a lack of a plan?

Planning is a western paradigm. We need to budget accurately to raise the necessary support. We need to have a language school in place before making a new city an entry point. Our strength today is certainly *not* in being pioneers. Our cautious approach (e.g., risk averse) can be seen as resistance to change (and maybe it is).

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pioneers.

There are exceptions to this fast-paced mindset such as Japan and Asians in North America that are sheltered somewhat from the economic impact of globalization. Japan, at least in the business world, is a consensual community.

North American Asians move cautiously making sure they have a plan in place. The message is that one can't assume that Asians are all the same, since they certainly do not approach problems in the same way.

5. Inter-Ethnic/National Rivalry

While we are all brothers and sisters, some are more outspoken or prejudiced concerning ethnicity or nationality. We need to be aware of perceptions between workers of different background especially based on stereotypes such as ethnicity. For example, the potential for conflict between mainland Chinese and Taiwanese is quite high given their political and economic tensions, but a Westerner may see both as just being Chinese. Less apparent are the way mainland Chinese and overseas Chinese see each other (e.g., both would prefer to work with Westerners than each other). Not all Asians are alike and no doubt, those from different countries in Africa and in Latin America are just as different.

6. Model of Support

The Western model of support is to provide for needs of an individual over the length of their service. This might be because very few individuals are coming from the West so the pool of resources can support all those sent (more or less).

The majority world churches have the potential of sending many more who are willing to go, and thus of exceeding their capacity to support them. This means that after supported language learning and a transition period, self-supporting is their model – at least for their living expenses. This drives them to live as simply as possible. We are seeing this among the rural Chinese who are coming. They practice tentmaking, as the Apostle Paul apparently did, in that they must live off their vocation. This is in contrast to tentmakers from a Western background who can choose their vocation to be just a platform or to be the basis of their ministry. Western tentmakers often have secondary incomes (e.g., support) such that their vocation doesn't have to cover expenses or the business they open doesn't have to be profitable.

One of the questions frequently asked of me during language school was how I could afford to live without a job. I could offer a plausible answer (though not all that true) that after working for twenty years as a professional, I had the resources to take an extended time for study. A single person straight out of college can also provide a plausible answer that her family wants them to live internationally before going to work. What plausible answer can someone from a rural background (e.g., a farmer) use to explain to their local community why they don't have to work during two years of language study?

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7. Living Standards

Conflict between western team members already exists, that revolves around living standards (e.g., who is being a good steward). This conflict plays out every time a conference is planned, for example. But it is more than just about how one lives, especially in status-bound cultures of the Arab World. One should assume there are no secrets in one's neighbourhood. So how can you visit an MWW co-worker in a lower status area (or have them come visit you) without affecting your own status in the community?

A related area is mindset. Most western workers come from a higher lifestyle and see themselves as living down when they move to the Arab world. Those from a rural background will need to live up to their role in Arab society (e.g., hired help is still a higher role than a farmer). Even then, they may not be living at a standard close enough to yours to avoid feeling uncomfortable. We see this amongst our own members. Who would not have a tinge of jealousy when one team member lives in a spacious villa (e.g., an oil company professional) and the other in a cramped apartment (e.g., a teacher)?

Even associating with a high-status Asian (e.g., professor or business executive) brings questions to a Westerner from Arab colleagues. Stereotyping is the norm and even an Asian professional has to demonstrate that they are just as good as or better than their Western colleague.

8. Role-Status Relationships

One element in our current follow-up model is that a more experienced team member is brought along when additional capacity to answer questions is needed (e.g., better Arabic or more respected in community). How does a team cooperate in follow-up when status relationships in their host society prevent their association with team members at presumably lower levels?

There are at least two different situations. The first is not being allowed to participate. A Western (e.g., Caucasian) professor is not allowed to go into the labour camps of the Gulf. Sometimes even the Chinese pastor is questioned when visiting Chinese labourers in the camps. The second is that status does not permit it. While a Western professor could go to visit someone in a lower income area, this could effectively limit their associations with any of their peers if it were known. We see this on our university campus where the Shi'a (generally poorer) don't say where they are from so they won't be ostracized from the more well to do Sunni and Christian Lebanese students.

Another example would be our relationships with our own household help that happen to be believers. As a Westerner, we are all brothers and sisters so it is natural to let them fellowship with us. Yet this would be seen negatively by neighbours in most Arab countries. My neighbour does not want to be associated with someone who spends free time with his or her maid. And even if our

Stereotyping is the norm and even an Asian professional has to demonstrate that they are just as good as or better than their Western colleague.

neighbour doesn't mind such behaviour, because they know us, her friends probably would, thereby putting limits on our relationship.

Even associating with a high-status Asian (e.g., professor or business executive) brings questions to a Westerner from Arab colleagues. Stereotyping is the norm and even an Asian professional has to demonstrate that they are just as good as or better than their Western colleague. Thus a Westerner bringing along an Asian should properly introduce them (e.g., portfolio manager at XYZ bank).

9. Member or Employee

The Western mission model has independent units, who are more or less equals, coming together as teams. The team members have similar backgrounds, and even if there are status differences in education, they are not as important in Western culture (e.g., PhD vs. BA/BS). Working with many MWWs brings in a new dimension that involves both educational background/life experiences and role-status relationships.

MWWs can use our assistance in getting them residency. They might come as a cook for our restaurant or to work in our factory. This places them in an employee-employer relationship-and they do not see themselves as equals. While from a Western perspective this may not be a big deal, it may well be with MWWs who come from cultures where jobs are scarce so the dynamic with the employer is different. For example, knowledge sharing in Arab culture is driven by fear of employer while in the West from an environment of collaboration (at least sometimes). The MWW may not be able to draw a distinction in their social life between the employer in the workplace, and the friend or colleague who happens to be one's boss.

There may be a difference in mindset perhaps reflecting socio-economic background. A colleague that is starting a small restaurant wants a worker (on full support) who cooks. The sending group wants people to come as cooks (e.g., earn a living) so they can 'work'. How could someone from a rural background have obtained the capital to invest as a 'business partner'? Role legitimacy is the issue. This area needs further investigation especially as the socio-economic distance increases.

10.Receiving Model

The groups in China sending out their initial waves are primarily looking for someone to provide them services to help their workers get settled. This is partly due to their lack of a receiving infrastructure but also due to constraints on

setting one up, because it requires collaboration with others. I have run into numerous cases where they want help to set up their workers but without any sense of ongoing obligation.

Our Western agency model is different. If we accept you into our circle, it is because we see you as family. That means we help you as we would a family member but also expect you to act as a family member. We are too busy to provide just a service and the fee that could be paid is not likely worth our time.

Those who represent groups in China are a bit surprised by this. They just see us as unwilling to help. What they don't understand is that accepting a family member comes with great responsibility. For example, a MWW gets sick and the few thousand dollars provided for emergencies won't cover the hospital bills. What do we do? Let them die because the money runs out or pay out of our own pocket? This is but one example.

Those who represent groups in China... see us as unwilling to help. What they don't understand is that accepting a family member comes with great responsibility.

11. Partnering Model

At least for rural China, a lack of trust that pervades society is manifested in the ways that ministry is done. This is partly why we see a desire amongst them to work independently. This works in China where the house church network allows an itinerant evangelist to go village to village and have their needs taken care of. I would argue that this is a different model from what you have in the field where the infrastructure for independent itinerants does not exist.

Yet there is a dilemma. Do we bring them into our fold (way we do things) or do we adapt to the strengths they bring (e.g., being able to reach the poor)? The former seems to be prevalent partly because we haven't explored other structures. The emergent mission movement probably would advocate a third approach – that we be the facilitators of their efforts (e.g., help establish them in a Bedouin community).

When just getting them to accept an MOU is an achievement (after much effort I might add), can we realistically expect them to become one of us? Even if there were mutual agreement that our existing teams would be assigned to prepare a basis for ministry for incoming MWWs, can our supporting churches accept this? What do you do? Well I no longer do front-line work – I am in a support role.

12. Evangelism Model

The focus of Western workers is on one-to-one sharing and at some point one-to-one discipling. Our MWWs may come from community-based models of evangelism and follow-up (e.g., conversions of families). That the Holy Spirit may work among Muslims in a communal fashion should not be discounted.

Visions and dreams of Jesus are commonplace among individuals according to field reports. There is no reason these signs can't be communal. Perhaps this is where we will begin to see some significant synergy and let our MWWs take the lead.

Implications

The AWM demographic has traditionally consisted of the more educated working in skilled tentmaking roles. AWM as an organization strives to place people in every country of the Arab World. When our numbers increase, we encourage newcomers to push towards outlying areas. Therefore, our teams don't have an infrastructure that needs to be maintained by co-workers. Yet infrastructure support is the logical place in which less educated MWWs could play a role. There are few opportunities to place in our ministries a handyman or hospitality people in support roles in a guesthouse or in a school or hospital. I don't think we recruit people with these skills either. This is not a value judgment – just the reality of whom we recruit. This is also why we can't do Business as Mission (BAM) internally because we have few people involved in small business nor do we seek to recruit them. Our national offices don't try to recruit sales people who could work in a Dubai supermarket (nor would they be hired). Yet these lower roles are the positions in which a greater number of Majority World people can be brought in.

It would be difficult for AWM to integrate rural MWWs (not just from rural China but also through any of our partner agencies) for the characteristics discussed above. These kinds of differences create operational distance that makes integration difficult. From my experience with partners from Asia, I believe that we should focus on integrating partners who are like us, whom we tend to recruit, at least in the near-term. Yet, despite the socio-economic and educational similarity of such MWWs to our team members, and the resulting lessening of operational distance, field leaders report that there still have been challenges. There is still much to learn but it may be more to do with 'language and culture' that we are more accustomed to dealing with. That said – other organizations (e.g., emerging mission movement) may have less 'distance' to cross than we do with respect to rural MWWs.

We certainly need to pay attention to what is going on in Yemen as our international partners begin deploying people there who have greater operational distance than those joining us in the rest of the AP. There are greater socio-economic differences and fewer financial resources, and therefore increased operational distance.

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New Models of Integration

I don't think it is practical to think that we can convert our existing people to work on integrating or assimilating rural MWWs. There is special gifting in this and a specific calling. So for example, if we want to play a greater role with rural MWWs from house churches in China, then we need to recruit those who have a burden to reach the house churches, who also speak Mandarin Chinese. Even within the overseas Chinese church, not all see a calling to help the mainland Chinese. The express role of these recruits would be to integrate themselves into AWM with the purpose of working with rural MWWs (who would be less likely to be integrated into AWM).

Several years ago, I had a chance encounter with an English teacher who had served in China for many years. These would be the ideal recruits to AWM for such roles. Many have been working to train house churches and could continue this role but in the Arab World and for the express purpose of helping the house church in China send missionaries. Overseas Chinese business people would be good candidates as well for our company. They could create businesses that hire MWWs (not just Chinese). One of course runs into a dilemma. The same lower skilled positions that a rural MWW might fill are the ones local believers could fill as well. Who then should one hire?

While some would disagree, I see that our higher-level relationships (on a social basis) are beneficial to facilitating the entry of rural MWWs. This might be through establishing businesses or building relationships with local authorities. I see us as a mission augmenting our front-line work by taking on new roles that can't be done by MWWs (e.g., Westerners don't face the discrimination of Asians or Africans), but that could enable MWWs to share in the blessing of service in the Arab World.

Conclusion

Working with MWWs (or for that matter our partner agencies) is more than language and culture. Some of these differences are inter-twined (e.g., role relationships and employee-employer relationships) and some are at the core of who we currently are as a mission. There seems to be a general lack of awareness within the company of what it takes to bring in our own majority world partners and even more so working with non-affiliated MWWs (such as workers from the rural Chinese church). The hope is that some light has been shed on these issues by looking beyond language and culture, and thereby putting us in a better position as a mission to advise teams on how to receive a MWW of background X and vocation Y. The mission's response can take into consideration some of the potential areas of difference raised in this article.

If we want to play a greater role with rural MWW from house churches in China, then we need to recruit those who have a burden to reach the house churches, who also speak Mandarin Chinese.

PART 3:**A SUNNI WOMAN'S HEART****PART FOUR: DESIRE FOR GOD'S APPROVAL AND
AMBIVALENCE TOWARD HIS NEARNESS****BY TAHIRA**

The author, a Westerner, has lived in the Middle East with her family for twenty years, residing in a variety of neighbourhoods and engaging in a variety of ministries. The following article is based on research she conducted for a Doctorate in Inter-cultural Studies.

Religion is often a human attempt to get nearer to God. But religion can also be a subtle way to hold God at arm's length while appearing to want his presence and approval. In the New Testament, the Pharisees exemplify people who *thought* they wanted to be close to God and approved by him, and who certainly wanted to appear that way to others. But their ungracious religious attitudes made clear that the God they believed in wasn't the sort of being one would want as a constant companion in life. And when God did come to them in Person, as the Messiah for whom they longed, they looked down their noses at him and emphatically rejected him.

The Muslim women among whom I live sometimes remind me of the Pharisees. They willingly, and even eagerly, follow hundreds of detailed regulations in order to meet God's approval. They want to be near him, at least in order to receive his acknowledgement and rewards. But God, as he is portrayed in their circles, is not the sort of being around whom one can ever rest. Although they insist that God's mercy is greater than his wrath, their pre-occupation with rules, merits and demerits, and the Day of Judgment belies an anxiety about God's watchful presence. My Muslim friends do not expect God to be accessible to them personally, and this void is experienced both as a sad longing and (more tacitly) as a relief.

How can we minister to women like these? Their understanding of God and their attitudes toward him create powerful barriers to truly knowing him, but the desire of some to know him suggests a possible opening.

Barriers

The barriers can seem overwhelming. Although longing for God's approval is wholesome, the theology of Sunni Islam hampers the development of a personal relationship with God by teaching that his approval is based on human behaviour. Traditional Sunni women have no concept of a personal relationship with a loving Father with whom one can live in safety apart from performance. God is portrayed as so transcendent that talk of his immanence seems alien.

Fear of speaking about God in human terms robs Muslim women of vocabulary suitable for expressing an intimate relationship with God. Rejection of the incarnation deprives these ladies of the knowledge of God in the face of Christ. Both the formulaic nature of prayers and the emphasis on the Muslim as a slave create a sense of prodigious distance. The countless rules guarantee uncertainty as to whether one is compliant enough.

Conservative Sunni women, whatever their longing, have been thoroughly trained not to expect much in the way of tender closeness with the Almighty and to distrust those who claim it is possible or desirable. A Muslim follower of Jesus described to me how the rigor of conscientious adherence to Islam made it impossible for her to feel love for the God who imposed such hardship on her, and yet she felt guilty for that lack of love.

Nevertheless, many Muslim women feel some sort of awareness of God's alleged nearness and approval in their religion, despite the fact that Islam keeps God at a distance. There is a strong belief that gaining God's approval and being near him are connected. I suspect that doing what they believe to be right gives the women a good feeling about themselves which they interpret as being at peace with God. They do not expect a direct relationship with God: everything is mediated through the Qur'an and Hadith, the consensus of the community, the intercession of Muhammad and the communication of angels. Even in heaven, nearness to God is portrayed in terms of physical distance and the honour which comes with God's approval, not intimacy. Since the women have not experienced a Father-child affection with God, and since they are taught not to expect it, they may not seek it and may be sceptical when it is offered, especially when it is offered freely.

Even the stiff variety of Sufism which is admired by some traditional Sunnis is seen as unattainable by ordinary women. Some of the avenues to Sufi piety are considered appropriate only to men, and others require special circumstances not accessible to normal daughters, wives and mothers. The result is distance. They cannot conceive of a God who forgives and delights in them *as they are*.

For Muslim women, God's favour is earned. This is not merely an accepted doctrine, but also the basis of intuitive responses to God. If someone longs to be closer to God, she automatically begins to ask herself, 'What can I do to make myself more acceptable to God?' Her stunted understanding of God's covenantal relationships and her total ignorance of his unconditional love prevent her from approaching him with empty hands and faith in his grace alone. It also leads her intuitively to minimize the problem of sin.

The focus on image in Arab society in general makes intimate discussions difficult. Fear of self-disclosure and vulnerability hamper probing and frank

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conversations about a person's relationship with God or lack thereof, especially since it is assumed that lack of a satisfactory relationship would be a sign of weakness and a cause for shame. Even if a Sunni woman is longing for intimacy with God, she would find it difficult to articulate that longing either to herself or to another person. This makes the job of the evangelist much harder.

The need for approval by others is so important in Arab society that often the approval or disapproval of others is interpreted as the approval or disapproval of God.¹ This is particularly true with regard to parental judgments. In the Levant region, one frequently sees bumper stickers that say, 'Oh, to please God and the parents!' Desire for human approval inhibits transparency with others, self and God, thereby making more difficult the sort of confession and genuine repentance by which one learns to find God's approval in Christ alone.

Bridges

But the situation is not hopeless. God has placed in all people's hearts an intuitive awareness of his existence and greatness. The devotion of pious Muslim women could well be an expression of a genuine desire to know God, even if they do not recognize it as such or admit that personal knowledge of God is possible. I have found that assuming such a desire in conversations with Muslim women contributes to mutual respect and a spiritual orientation in discussion. The testimonies of women from Muslim backgrounds vary enormously, but common to many is the delight they found in discovering that God wants to be their loving Father.

The Qur'an and the Hadith contain a number of expressions appropriate to begin a discussion about a personal relationship with God. In Sura 93 for example, God, seeking to comfort and encourage Muhammad, reminds him of how he found him, met his needs and displayed to him divine grace. Sura 94 begins in a similar vein. One popular saying of Muhammad is striking in its similarity to James 4:8: 'And whoever came nearer to me by a span of a hand, I came nearer to him by a span of a forearm; and whoever came nearer to me by a span of a forearm, I came nearer to him by a span of outstretched arms; and whoever came to me walking, I came rushing to him.'² Muslims are familiar with several biblical characters like Enoch, Abraham, Hagar, Moses, David and Jesus who model intimacy with him.³ Many Sunni women have a degree of admiration for Sufism, strong reservations notwithstanding, and this lends a degree of

1. This is the case for other cultures as well: Hesselgrave, 'Missionary Elencitics,' 480.

2. In Arabic it reads, ومن أتاني يمشي أتيت به هرولة، ومن تقرب مني ذراعا تقربت منه باعا، ومن أتاني يمشي أتيت به هرولة. This saying can be found, among other places, in (المكتبة الثقافية: Beirut), 57.

3. It is necessary, however, to supplement the traditional Islamic knowledge of these characters with details from the Scriptures.

acceptability to talk of a love relationship with God. Both Evangelicals and Sunnis acknowledge that at times we fail to win God's approval, that there is a distance between God and humanity that needs to be spanned, that he is full of wrath against sinners, that he has taken the initiative in bridging the gap, and that his acceptance is ultimately based on his mercy. The use of Muslim theology, sources and expressions may help the Muslim hearer to listen thoughtfully, and not just reject the idea of intimacy with God out of hand.⁴

Fault Lines

When it comes to the themes of God's nearness and approval, I sense in Muslim women a great deal of ambiguity. There is a significant amount of talk about God's nearness in theory among the women I studied, but virtually nothing of personal experience of God himself. Reality does not match the ideal. God may be 'nearer than your jugular vein,' but who wants to be near a God who watches her every move with criticism or appreciation?

Islam serves as a God-substitute, and it would be surprising if some of the women did not have an inkling that only what is real can satisfy. Aside from a few trite Sufi quotations, Sunni leaders in my region describe nearness to God in the most vague or superficial terms. Surely this must be unsatisfying for some. There is a long history of tension in Sunni Islam between the scholars and the mystics, a tension that may be reflected in the lives of some Muslims who want to cling both to the known, impersonal law and a to a distant ideal of intensely personal spirituality. Muslims might be challenged to consider Jesus as a way of resolving this tension with a righteousness based on relationship with the Righteous One.

Missional Strategies

If I want something and someone else has it, I will be interested in knowing how that person got it. The Muslim might be interested in the cause of a believer's confidence in God's approval and love, particularly if that confidence is accompanied by genuine goodness. Of primary importance in encouraging others to have a personal relationship with God is allowing others to see one's own relationship with God in word, deed and character. The result will be some things that are attractive to this subculture (gratitude in all circumstances, the fruit of the spirit, intrinsic motivation for

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4. Some believers from a Muslim background question this statement. One friend points out that there is a lack of Qur'anic teaching on intimacy with God and the suspicion of many Sunnis that Sufism is the domain of heretics.

holiness), and some that are not (focus on Jesus as the mediator, confession of sin, lack of conformity to the rules and critical spirit of some Muslim 'Pharisees'). We can speak of God in endearing terms, and explain the nature, basis and source of our relationship with him. Personal testimony is more memorable than theological argument for ordinary people. Evangelical clichés (such as 'knowing God as your personal Saviour') must be avoided at all costs: only what is fresh and vital will have an impact.

My experience is that women of this background will listen to personal testimony with a wary curiosity, but will rarely try to contradict it. This is in contrast with a rational apologetic approach, which nearly always results in debate, usually of dubious value. Talk of intimacy with God can be made to sound less alien by the circumspect use of Qur'anic terminology, by reference to people like Abraham and Hagar who knew God personally, and by quotations of the sort of Sufis most acceptable to a conservative Sunni audience.⁵ An evangelist who talks about personal experience of God must be prepared to answer some

hard questions, particularly about how God speaks to individuals and the relationship between the personal relationship and authoritative revelation. He or she must reiterate continually that confidence in God's acceptance has everything to do with his mercy and nothing to do with human religious superiority.

If we are aware of specific emotional needs in a person's life, we can recount how God met a similar need for us in Jesus.⁶ As one believer from a Muslim background points out, we make clear that we do not see ourselves as superior when we speak of our own needs. Instead, we point to Jesus, who showed us God's grace when we were needy.

Although it may be intimidating to some, it may be beneficial to gently ask a Muslim friend what is happening in her relationship with God: what God is teaching her, how he is transforming and comforting her, and so on. If the answer is lame, the Muslim

probably recognizes the fact, even if she tries to save face. However, an answer may be an indication of how the Holy Spirit is working in the person's life and an opportunity to cooperate with that work. Some Muslims are happy for followers of Jesus to pray with and for them that they can know God more intimately.

Although it may be intimidating to some, it may be beneficial to gently ask a Muslim friend what is happening in her relationship with God: what God is teaching her, how he is transforming and comforting her, and so on.

5. That is, al-Ghazali and not al-Hallaj. Rabi'a is a favorite of women. Ignorance of the lives and histories of biblical characters may inhibit some women from appreciating the significance of their walk with God.

6. One worker notes that this still leaves a big gap between accepting Jesus as *a* mediator and accepting him as *the* mediator.

It is helpful to build on shared beliefs such as God's mercy and our need for it, God's initiative in restoring relationships when we fail, the need for intrinsic motivation in order to be truly pious, the need for God's help to overcome temptation, and that the pious person should be characterized by love, joy and confidence. Muslims will need to have explained to them that forgiveness is costly, and that the experience of forgiveness between humans is a partial picture of God's forgiveness. They also need to hear a Christian understanding of heaven in which relationship to God is the central joy.⁷

As with all new believers, those from a Muslim background will benefit by mature guidance in exploring and developing their relationship with God. Evangelical churches are weak in understanding the social implications of the individual's relationship with God, and need to think these through for themselves in order to find comprehensible ways of explaining them to Muslims.

As with all new believers, those from a Muslim background will benefit by mature guidance in exploring and developing their relationship with God.

Conclusion

I once asked Mazhar Mallouhi how he responds to a Muslim who asks his opinion of the Qur'an. Mazhar replied with this parable: 'I am drowning in the sea, and on the shore stand people who want to help me. Most of them are throwing me their favourite books about how to swim, but One is holding out his hand to me. To which should I turn?'

Many Muslims are valiantly paddling to reach the shore of God's approval, some deceive themselves that they are already on solid ground of their own making, and others have given up. And One comes, walking on the water, nearer than expected, graciously holding out his hand, ready to speak peace. I would love for every Muslim woman I know to discover from personal experience of Jesus how intimately near God can be to her, nearer even than her jugular vein.

7. This may be of special interest to women who resent the traditional Muslim view of The Garden as a playboy's paradise.

PART 4: BOOK REVIEWS

ASK YOUR MUSLIM FRIEND:
AN INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM AND A CHRISTIAN'S
GUIDE FOR INTERACTION WITH MUSLIMS

by **Andreas Maurer.**

AcadSA Publishing, Kempton Park, South Africa. 172 pages.

(Available from most AWM national offices)

This book is true to its title. Woven through the entire book is the premise that the best way to witness to Muslims is to ask them questions. This avoids allowing the discussion to become confrontational, gets the Muslim friend to think through the issue, reinforces the relationship, and generally produces a more constructive discussion. In every section of the book there are coloured boxes with suggested leading questions that one can ask the Muslim. These lists of questions are very helpful, and it is obvious that the author has had many discussions with Muslims and knows what questions to ask and how to ask them.

This book is also true to its subtitle. The first ninety-three pages are a concise introduction to the history of Islam, Muslim practices, Muslim culture and the contemporary movements one finds in Islam today. Material on Islamic fundamentalism and other subjects is often presented in summarized format as a list of points rather than in a narrative. Thus, the material lends itself to be used as an easy reference or as a resource for presentations. In his section on Sayyid Qutub, the father of modern jihadist movements, Maurer gives a list of thirteen major aspects of Qutub and the characteristics of his teaching given in bullet point format. Most topics, however, are written in brief paragraphs, making this a very readable guide with all the salient points covered.

The last two chapters deal with answering Muslim objections and a guide to encountering Muslims. The charts that Maurer includes, which compare the similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam on various theological topics, are themselves enough to make the book worth having. There are in-depth descriptions of Muslim belief, and quotations from the Surahs and the Bible with very helpful citations of Arabic words relating to Muslim concepts. The answer to the Muslim objection about the corruption of the Scriptures is a comprehensive answer drawn from history, manuscripts and the Qur'an. Maurer has broken this down to three separate questions: 'The Bible is not God's revelation,' 'The Bible is not the Word of God,' and 'Christians have Bibles with contradictory texts.' Complete and specific answers are given to all three questions. Maurer's experience in dialogue with Muslims is evident in how he has identified the specific points of their objections. Readers will find that these are exactly the questions that Muslims they meet will ask them.

This book is also a guide for Christians on how to witness. Maurer uses the final forty-five pages of the book to address the attitude, motivation and practical aspects of witnessing to the Muslim person. The main contribution of this section is Maurer's detailed description of his approach to witnessing that involves asking Muslims questions. Once again there are coloured boxes in this section with very helpful questions showing how this works. In one section, Maurer gives ten basic rules to keep in mind while witnessing with Muslims, which are also presented in outline form. One section that everyone will find valuable is on the use of illustrations, parables and stories. Here, Maurer gives six short stories he has used with Muslims.

The appendices include an eight-page glossary with more than forty Islamic terms, in which the Arabic word is listed along with its transliteration and explanation in English. To cite just one example; he explains that takfir, means 'to declare a person an unbeliever (kafir)', and that it applies 'in particular those who leave Islam' (p. 190). This list of definitions is very handy to have as a reference.

Ask Your Muslim Friend is an excellent one-volume guide for Christians wanting to acquaint themselves with Muslim beliefs and practices, as well as for those who wish to engage with Muslims in an effective and Biblical way. It is both comprehensive in its treatment of its subject as well as concise. This book also lends itself as a resource for those engaged in training non-specialist Christians in how to witness to Muslims. This should be the first book someone reads as they prepare for ministry to Muslims.

Reviewed by Dale Martin

AMERICAN EVANGELICALS IN EGYPT: MISSIONARY ENCOUNTERS IN AN AGE OF EMPIRE

by **Heather J. Sharkey**

Princeton University Press, 2008

American Evangelicals in Egypt is a thoroughly researched account of the American Mission in Egypt, of the defunct United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA) and the United Presbyterian Church in the USA. (UPCUSA). As with the author's other writings, this book is extremely well-documented and draws on many first-hand accounts in English, Arabic, and to a lesser extent, French. It is a book that all evangelicals who have an interest in missionary work among Muslims should read, especially for those serving or going to serve in Egypt.

Sharkey states that her book 'neither advocates Christian missions nor endorses evangelization' (p. 14). Her goal 'is to produce a history of the American missionary encounter in Egypt that illuminates both the Egyptian and American dimensions of this historical exchange while attending to the changing

landscapes of social attitudes and religious beliefs. It aims to show that missionary history is not only 'about' Christianity and its transmission but rather covers the social, cultural, and political lives of individuals and communities' (p. 16) and 'contends, in short, that people involved in missionary encounters changed significantly – and changed each other – without necessarily 'converting' in the sense of either registering or announcing a shift of religious identity or spiritual life' (p. 15).

Although writing from a non-evangelical viewpoint, the author is surprisingly fair in her treatment of evangelicals. This is a testament to her commitment to properly resource her subjects and let the reader draw one's own conclusions. It is refreshing to read a recent publication about pioneer missions in the Middle East that was not specifically written to denigrate missionaries, whether in part or in whole.

The American (Presbyterian) Mission, the largest missionary enterprise in Egypt, began in 1854 and officially disbanded in 1967. Through this 'extended' century, Sharkey identifies 4 distinct time periods and major emphases (pp. 216-7):

1. 1854-1882, the focus was on evangelizing Coptic Orthodox adherents
2. 1882-1918, the 'colonial moment' gave the mission freedom to openly evangelize Muslims
3. 1918-1945, the 'retrenchment' of the mission due to loss of finances as well as Muslim opposition
4. 1945-1967, the turning over of the mission to the Egyptian Evangelical Church

During this time the American Mission 'opened dozens of schools, medical facilities and public libraries; initiated rural development programs to improve livestock and reduce the spread of endemic diseases; and vigorously promoted literacy campaigns, especially for the sake of Bible reading... By the mid-1950s they claimed some 200 living converts from Islam within a small Evangelical Presbyterian community of just under 27,000 members, most of whom had come from Coptic Orthodoxy' (p. 1). In addition, the mission policy and practice gradually changed from that of proclaiming the Gospel with the goal of seeking converts to a 'social gospel' in which educational, medical and other services were felt to be a sufficient witness of Christianity and where conversion of the individual was not actively sought (cf. pp. 14-15, 191, 219-221). Sharkey especially highlights the 'theological transitions' of Charles R. Watson, a one-time member of the American Mission who eventually started the American University in Cairo (AUC), as a premier example of these changes in thinking and practice (cf. pp. 168-169, 222).

The author also touches on a number of important points worthy of serious consideration such as:

- American/Western emphasis on individuality and its clash with Middle Eastern culture, especially among Muslims (pp. 5, 12, et. al.)

- Missionary activity inadvertently mobilizing anti-colonial nationalists and Islamists (p. 1; ch. 4)
- Missionary cooperation giving birth to ecumenism (pp. 3-4, 52, 207, 226-227)
- Start of the American University in Cairo (AUC) (pp. 149-162)
- Move from the belief of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone to universalism (pp. 71, 161-169, 215)
- Missionary influence on the political views and policies of the US (p.2)
- Missionary clashes with the political views and policies of the US (pp. 2, 180, 187-188)
- Acceptance of women into the clergy (pp. 2, 7)
- Failure of the legal passage of religious liberty to result in great conversions among Muslims (pp. 5, 51; ch. 4).

Of the many issues that this book addresses some have great import for those who currently minister to Arabic-speaking Muslims:

- How does one reconcile the tension between Jesus' call to individual conversion in light of Muslim social structure which discourages such individual decisions?
- Many of the ideas about Islam among those missionaries who espoused 'modernism' or a 'social gospel' are identical to the perspectives of those today who espouse C5/Insider movements!
- Regardless of how accommodating missionaries are to Muslims there is constant pressure from Muslims to control and/or eliminate missionaries and their activities from the country, regardless of how beneficial those services are to Muslims.
- The suspicion and hatred of evangelicals that Al-Azhar teaches its students should not be underestimated (nor is this influence limited to Egypt).
- Learning Arabic is essential for understanding and communication; fluency in the language should be the goal.
- It is imperative for missionaries to know what Muslims are saying about them, both in the media as well as 'on the street.'
- Handing over control of local congregations and ministries to native believers should be part of missionary strategy and not a by-product of missionaries losing their legal authority to remain in and minister in the country.

The one major weakness of this book is that the author fails to adequately define 'evangelical' for the reader. The way in which the early missionaries understood and used the term differed from how it was understood and used by some of the later missionaries. For example, she quotes two retired missionaries from the American Mission, who served in the latter half of the 20th Century:

When asked, 'What has the term 'evangelical' meant to you?' Kenneth E. Nolin... answered that he associated the term with the Arabic word al-Injil, meaning the New Testament or gospel. Referring to the fact that the Qur'an recognizes al-Injil as a sacred scripture that is part of Islam's heritage, he added, 'I like the sense of contact with the people of Islam and their Qur'an that it (the word injil) gives, as is also true of the word Allah (God), used in the Arabic Bible.' Meanwhile, when asked whether American Presbyterians were still evangelicals, John G. Lorimer answered, 'We are reluctant to surrender the title 'evangelical.' I am sure that most of my colleagues, and I myself, consider themselves 'evangelical' in the best sense of that word, as distinguished from 'fundamentalist.' The two words are sometimes mistakenly used as synonyms.' (p. 228)

When pioneer missionary, Andrew Watson, who served in the 19th and early 20th centuries, wrote of the 'pure gospel' he had a very specific understanding that the 'gospel' was the biblical message of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and that he, along with other missionaries actively sought individual conversion and not simply denominational identity (p. 19) – it had nothing to do with a word association in the Koran or as a distinct 'tradition' separate from twentieth-century 'fundamentalism.' Towards the close of the American Mission in Egypt, people like Charles R. Watson and James K. Quay may have retained the term 'evangelical,' but had come to redefine its earlier meaning, in practice, if not in theory. Because of this obfuscation the book ends with the unfortunate conclusion that by 1967 American Presbyterians 'were aware, too, that the United States was just one small part of this world and that it had no monopoly on 'true gospel' (p. 231). The pioneers of the American Mission in Egypt never assumed such an arrogant idea. That these pioneers freely worked with other denominations, organizations, and individuals who shared in the core set of New Testament beliefs that properly constitute one an 'evangelical' is sufficient proof that they did not feel that they had a 'monopoly on the 'true gospel.'

In conclusion, Sharkey sets a high standard for research, knowledge, and even-handed judgments to which all of us should aspire. Although her viewpoint is not pro-evangelical it is neither anti-evangelical in the sense that she seeks to negatively criticize evangelicals. *American Evangelicals in Egypt* is an invaluable historical primer that will benefit all who read it. May it compel and inspire further research of our spiritual predecessors and their works in light of what the Bible teaches. We have much to learn from both their successes and their failures.

Reviewed by Adam Simnowitz

Adam serves with the Assemblies of God in the US, ministering to and among Muslims in a large urban concentration of Arabic (& English!) speaking Muslim immigrants.



THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND ISHMAEL: ONE WAY TO PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

By Jaap Bonker & Maarten Nota

Krimpen aan de Led, & Initialmedia & Verité, 2008

Written by the director of AWZ, Arab World Ministries' ministry in the Netherlands, this book takes an unusual approach to examining the sensitive and enduring conflict between Palestinians and Jews over the land that both ethnic groups claim as their own. Published in 2008, this book is really the culmination of many years of personal interest and investigation into this conflict by Jaap. This book is written with help from Maarten Nota, with whom he earlier co-authored a book on manipulation and abuse in the church.¹

Leafing through the book, one is struck by the smart layout that is complete with numerous photographs. The English translation from Dutch is extremely well done and adds to the book's attractiveness. It is good that the book is attractive since the topic is sure to draw the ire of those with entrenched viewpoints on the Middle East struggle – which topic Jaap hopes to help readers approach with greater openness and charitable engagement.

His thesis essentially is that just as Abraham was the father of both Isaac and Ishmael and loved both of his sons; we too should love the Jew (coming through Isaac and Jacob) and the Palestinian (coming through Ishmael). This thesis of *rapprochement* is summarized in his statement: 'I do hope that Jesus' disciples will develop more love for Ishmael, without losing sight of Jacob.' In some sense, Jaap's book is a popular version of Gary Burge's more scholarly book, *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians are not being told about Israel and Palestinians*.² Both authors acknowledge the special place in God's economy for Arabs and Jews, but Burge is not so gentle in letting modern-day Israel off the hook for abuse of its power in dealing with a disenfranchised people within its own borders. Both authors show far greater empathy toward Palestinians than Israelis without showing disrespect to the nation through whom God choose to specially reveal Himself. Both authors take us on a tour of Palestinian Territories and make its people real.

This book shows the historical interface between the races emanating from the two half-brothers, as it engages both Scripture and contemporary events to demonstrate how their two histories are so intertwined. It traces Abraham's journey from Haran to Hebron. Not allowing us to treat the story line found in Genesis at face value, the author contrasts the ancient names and locations with present-day recognizable contexts and places. Jaap's extensive visits to places like

1. Goring by Sea, UK: Initialmedia, 2008.

2. Cleveland, USA: The Pilgrim Press, 2003.

the Gaza Strip enable him to have the Palestinians come alive and help us explore the plight of the stateless Palestinian people more intimately. So does his use of the present tense throughout, which has the affect of reinforcing the connection between biblical characters and places of old with the current situation.

Some may question the shaky exegesis the case is built on to defend the thesis that God loves and favours Ishmael and not just Isaac, as in his treatment of Genesis 16:12 (pages 95 to 98) but we are still left with the fact that God does make certain promises to Ishmael and his offspring (from whom the Arab peoples come; the case for this claim is made in chapter 31), such as in Genesis 17:20.

One may also be disappointed that Jaap avoided looking at the eschatological implications of taking the stand that he has in his book.

Jaap is to be commended, though, for topically reflecting on a subject and land where angels fear to tread. He takes the sort of stance that Evangelicals around the world should be striving for, to model how to be a peacemaker and open to reason on this thorny, complex subject.

Reviewed by J. David Lundy

THE GREAT EMERGENCE: HOW CHRISTIANITY IS CHANGING AND WHY

by Phyllis Tickle

Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2008. ISBN # 978-0-8010-1313-3

With such a grandiose title, the expectation might be of an overblown and disappointing book. I would not have selected this book to read if it were not for the president of a denomination who recommended it to me as being a seminal treatment of cultural and church history trends in the Western world church. But I must say that this is a 'big idea' book that delivers the goods. In my view, Tickle succeeds in making the case that we are in the midst of a sea change in the church. One that comes along once every five hundred years, she contends, and which has the affect of rejuvenating the church.

One might ask why should a narrow niche mission agency working in a decidedly non-Western world context, for the most part, such as AWM, pay attention to the message of a book focusing on Western religious philosophy and future trends. Well, for two reasons. Inadvertently because it might have something to say about what kind of churches are planted and nurtured; our ethnocentrism surely affects such efforts. More importantly though, if such organizations are increasingly out of touch with the way churches are forming in the West, and with how Christians in these churches think about their faith and mission, they might become an anachronism, a dying mission agency, unable to recruit the next generation of those God wants to send to the unreached world.

The bi-millennial paradigm shifts in the church Tickle refers to are: movement in the sixth century from a structured and carefully-defined Apostolic church to an organized monasticism as the true keeper of the faith with Gregory the Great being considered as its patron saint; the Great Schism of 1054 in which Roman and Eastern expressions of Christianity parted company; and the Reformation of the 16th century, symbolized and treated as starting with the publication of Luther's 95 Theses, with its emphasis on sola scriptura instead of the church being the source of authority for the faith.

So, what is happening today in the church that is so earth shaking? To add context to her claims, Tickle argues that toward the end of each five hundred year cycle social, cultural, scientific and political changes move in parallel with religious changes, in turn influencing and being influenced by them. To wit, preceding and during the Reformation, to relate her theory to one epoch, laying the groundwork for the Reformation was the tension between peoples and powers of Italy and princes and powers of France. This shattered the assumption that religious power resided in one pope, not a far cry from asking whether such authority on ultimate questions should reside in any pope. Interreligious clashes of the late fourteen and fifteenth centuries, such as between the Ottoman Empire and Spain, resulted in a reconsideration of the role of church in society. Similarly, the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in 1440 gave rise to widespread literacy across Europe and made the dissemination of Luther's, Calvin's and Wycliffe's ideas possible and popular.

Tickle is at her best in chronicling and interpreting the massive changes in society of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She claims these societal changes have paved the way for accompanying upheavals amongst God's People about how they view Truth, understand authority and do church. She labels this mega-shift the Great Emergence. The use of this term alongside the labels we are becoming familiar with like *emergent* and *emerging* church is not coincidental.

She views the work of Darwin and Faraday in scientific theory as the tipping point in unsettling Protestantism, the fruit of the Reformation. Their thought/findings, in biology and physics respectively, brought into question the veracity and authority of Scripture and developed hardening lines between evangelicals (fundamentalists as they were called in the early twentieth century) and a more liberal wing of Protestantism. The theories of Freud, Jung and Campbell in social sciences had the affect of nibbling away at hitherto relatively uncontested Christian truth claims as to the exclusivity and particularity of Christ and the Bible. The advent of radio and television resulted in the rapid exchange and spread of information analogous to the printing press five hundred

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years earlier. Creating further foment in society was the invention of the car, the airplane, and the political theory of Karl Marx. The emergence of new sciences unheard of several generations ago, like anthropology, computer science, chaos math and network theory, and nanotechnology gave rise to the possibility of new realities like artificial intelligence and questions about what is human personality and where our authority is to be found.

From there, it is not a long leap for Tickle to realistically discern that the over-arching questions of the Great Emergence have to do with the relation that religions have to one another and the nature of human consciousness or the humanness of the person (p. 73).

On the religious front, the new searching for meaning could be seen in Albert Schweitzer's influential 1901 *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*. A generation later, using literary deconstruction and form criticism, scholars sought to 'demythologize' the Scriptures just as Schweitzer had sought to do with Christ. Pentecostalism appeared on the scene a century ago, too. It found ultimate authority in the subjective experience of the Christian (more correctly, in the Holy Spirit). Tickle believes that the impact of Pentecostalism on conservative Christianity and Roman Catholicism has been vast.

Social changes like massive immigration, popularization of drugs and contraceptives, and revision of traditional gender and sexual roles, all undermined accepted views of where authority lay, such as with the Scriptures, especially where a literal interpretation was held. While the world was going flat, the church was losing its commitment to hierarchy as, for instance, found in denominational affiliations.

So, one might ask, though it is well and good to have this basic review of modern history in the West, what difference does it make to know these things? Well, if we are going to relate to Christians in the world we visit on Home Ministry Assignment, and if we are going to recruit a new generation of workers for the Arab world, we need to equip ourselves for quite a cross cultural experience.

According to Tickle, the emergent church world has a number of significant new characteristics:

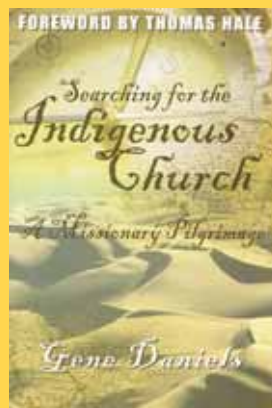
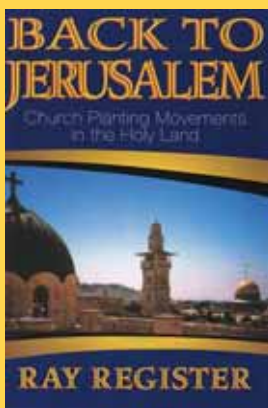
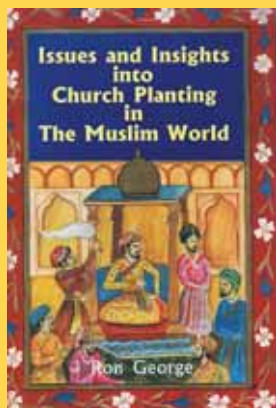
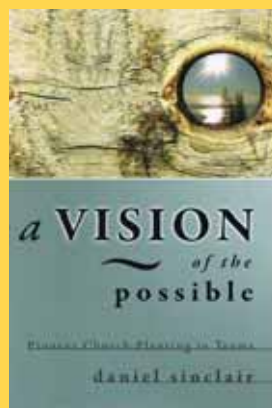
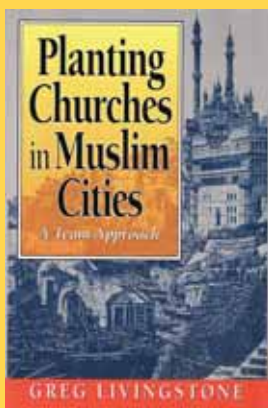
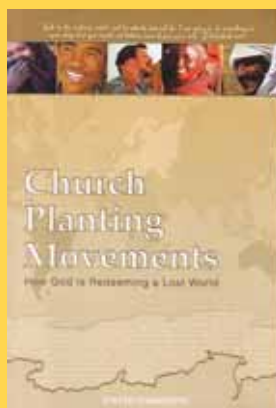
- The inerrancy of Scripture is not considered worth fighting over as more important questions beg answering like 'are our good-living Hindu neighbours really lost if they do not put their faith in Christ?'
- Putting our energies into issues of social justice for those disempowered around the world, such as the Dalits in India, is the heart of mission.
- Evangelicals are becoming liturgical and Pentecostals organized. Mixing and matching does not allow for easy labels to be put on denominations and independent churches in foment.
- Conservative evangelicals are questioning some aspects of their fundamentalism such as in the abortion issue as to when human life really begins.

- Being in community and allowing the Spirit to teach in that context is as important in defining Truth as a subjectively-interpreted and humanly-transmitted Scripture.
- ‘Cherry-picking’ means that consumer Christians do not have loyalty to one church body but get their inspiration and fellowship from a variety of sources, and churches as a whole do the same thing too, with an increasing disregard for denominational loyalties and prescribed creeds.
- A building is not what defines a church. Rather, a church should be defined by what a body of believers is doing in its community, which may also affect where they meet for worship and fellowship, be that a pub, a school or a home.
- Just as the culture has become post-modern, post-institutional, post-rational, post-Enlightenment, post-literate and post-Christendom, so has the church.

Are there weaknesses to the book? Apart from the question of how flawed Tickle’s basic thesis might be (what happens if the question of authority gets resolved essentially across Protestantism in a return to inherited church instead of emergent church?), there is a tendency to generalize from the American experience. That being said, few would argue that the church is also in upheaval in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Canada and several parts of Latin America, Asia and Africa, as characterized above. I also found the diagramming of parts of her analysis, especially in the last two chapters, distracting more than helpful. Nevertheless, in a lucid and refreshingly original way, Tickle gives a breathtaking view of the state of the Western world church today and where it might be headed. We would be wise to pay attention.

Reviewed by J. David Lundy





Church planting, church discipline, the roles of International churches, the roles of the worker's family, the roles of Majority world workers, especially the Chinese, appropriate strategies and principles for church planting...

The articles in this *Seedbed*, by a variety of practitioners and strategists, explore some of the issues central to our calling as church planters in the Arab world.